

# Marxism Today

April 84

75p

Beatrix Campbell on  
the future of the Left  
Andropov's 455 days  
Barry Manilow • China watching



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## DIVORCE: KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

The Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Bill, which has now received its second reading in the House of Commons, has had considerable support from sections of all the main political parties. Despite this it is a particularly controversial piece of government legislation. Originally a private member's bill introduced before the general election last year, it was taken on board by the Government in the Tory manifesto commitment to 'reform the divorce laws to offer further protection to children, and to secure fairer financial arrangements when a marriage ends'.

The Bill includes a number of clauses relating to England and Wales: in particular Part 1 allows for petitioning for divorce after one year of marriage instead of the current requirement of three years; while Part 2 concerns financial relief in matrimonial proceedings, removing the current requirement that the court should place the parties in the financial position in which they would have been if the marriage had not broken down. Supporters of the Bill argue that the present law provides a 'meal ticket for life' in the provision of maintenance for former wives, while those opposing it argue that there is not enough regard for wives who have given up a career on account of family commitments and who then are expected to 'stand on their own feet'.

Clearly central to the debate surrounding the Bill is the employment situation of divorced women and indeed trends in married women's employment. It is therefore relevant to know to what extent divorced mothers already rely on their own earnings and what factors affect the ability of women, with or without children, to become more self-sufficient. The recently announced examination of occupational pensions and divorce by the Lord Chancellor's Department highlights the importance of this issue. It remains to be seen whether these issues will be examined by the special standing committee on the Bill which is now receiving evidence from interested parties before going on to examine the Bill in detail.

The current level of divorce is now causing problems and raising issues in a number of areas. The increase has been truly staggering over the last 20 years, fuelled in part by the changes in the law in 1971. In 1982 there were nearly 147,000 divorces in England and Wales compared to 74,000 in 1971 and 25,000 in 1961. Overall, if present trends continue, one in



three marriages is likely to end in divorce. (However the overall figures disguise a complex reality both in terms of who divorces and why people divorce. For example the risk of divorce is higher the younger the woman at marriage; presently one marriage in two involving a teenage bride is likely to end in divorce.) In 1982 158,000 children were affected by the divorce of their parents. Again if current trends continue about one in five children will experience their parents' divorce before they reach the age of 16.

While supporters of the Bill have admitted that the needs of children should be of primary importance in the legislation, it is clear from the Bill's almost exclusive reference to the private law of maintenance that a conflict may arise between the avowed consideration of children's welfare and the desire for a 'clean-break' and greater 'self-sufficiency' on the part of both spouses. The changes in the law seek to distinguish between the obligation to a former spouse and the obligations to children, while recognising that the financial situation of the custodial parent and children will be 'inextricably interlinked'.

The preoccupation of much of the media with 'alimony drones' has obscured what little evidence there is as regards the contribution of maintenance to incomes of the divorced<sup>1</sup>, usually the mother in the case of those 60% of divorcing couples with children. Both awards of maintenance and

income from employment, particularly part-time work, can be and often are offset against social security entitlements. This complex interaction of various sources of income has given rise to a severe poverty trap for one-parent families, two-thirds of whom are divorced or separated. Divorced women with dependent children are more likely to work full-time than other women with dependent children, including married women, suggesting a greater degree of 'self-sufficiency' than is generally assumed.

However, lone mothers are as subject to the concentration of female workers in poorly paid jobs as women in general, and this inevitably gives rise to a greater degree of poverty in one-parent families reliant on only one wage than is the case in two-parent families where the woman's husband may also be in employment. Thus despite comprising only one in eight families in Britain, one-parent families account for two in every five families receiving family income supplement to 'top-up' their low earnings. Nor is the impact of divorce on women's employment similar across all classes. While approximately seven out of ten wives of men in professional occupations were working either part-time or full-time both before and after separation, the proportion of women in work previously married to unskilled and semi-skilled workers fell from a half to little more than a third after separation.

<sup>1</sup> *Divorce: a Briefing Paper*, Family Policy Studies Centre, 1984.

As the Law Commission has noted, the most serious problems faced by lone parents, including divorced mothers, are caused by economic factors and there is little if anything private law can do to alleviate the hardship and deprivation that they experience. But there are no proposals in the legislation on these wider social security issues. Many of these, raised by the Finer Committee on one-parent families, remain unresolved, and with little apparent willingness to return to them. The new Bill has not been designed as an anti-poverty measure nor is this to be expected. But it does raise serious questions about the relationship of private law both to the public provision of social security benefits and to the role of conciliation services for divorcing couples. Equally important is the need for close monitoring of the effect of the legislation on the living standards of one-parent families and on the second families of maintenance-paying divorcees, given the uncertainty about its likely impact on the welfare of all families affected.

It is essential that this new legislation is examined in this broader context of family welfare. It will also be evaluated in the context of the Government's self-perceived role of 'defender of family'. The often contradictory aspects of this role which encourages self-reliance and yet puts obstacles in the way of working mothers wishing to provide their children with a decent standard of living, suggests that we must be wary of legislation which might prove to be the proverbial conservative wolf in liberal sheep's clothing.

*Gerard O'Neill*

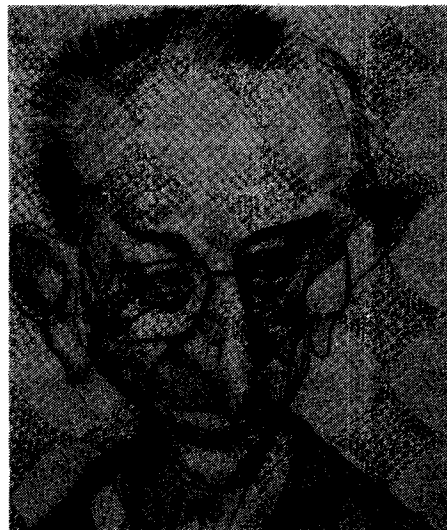
## ANDROPOV'S 455 DAYS

Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov's occupancy of the post of general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the shortest by far of any Soviet leader. While his death at the age of 69 after several months of illness is too recent for a full assessment of his contribution, it cannot be disputed that there have been important developments in the Soviet Union since the death of Brezhnev.

What, specifically, changed under Andropov? First, there was the turn to greater realism. Of great significance here were his major political statements, 'The teaching of Karl Marx and some questions of building socialism in the USSR' and his speech at the June plenary meeting of the central committee on the new party programme. There are parallels with previous changes of leadership. After

Stalin, the party frankly acknowledged the existence of many problems and energetically, if not always wisely, set about their solution. Later, exaggerated estimates of the progress achieved began to gather strength and found their expression in the new party programme adopted in 1961.

After Khrushchev, the concept of developed socialism as a relatively prolonged stage on the road to communism initially, at least, reflected a more realistic assessment of the position reached and the magnitude of the tasks ahead. In the course of time, however, this concept began to undergo gradual redefinition and interpretations became increasingly complacent and triumphalist. Andropov made clear his conviction that the USSR is still in the early stages of developed socialism and faces a long period during which it must be gradually improved. Communism has been deferred yet again. This theoretical issue has great practical significance: it makes



*Andropov*

possible a more frank acknowledgment of existing shortcomings and contradictions, and opens the way to their solution by means which otherwise could be considered retreats on the forward march to communism.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the economic situation in the Soviet Union deteriorated. The decline in the rate of growth of national income experienced over many years became more marked, accentuated by a series of poor harvests. The labour supply situation worsened, in part for demographic reasons, but also as a consequence of the maintenance of an investment policy orientated towards the building of new enterprises, requiring additional labour, rather than the re-equipping of existing capacity. The output: capital ratio of the economy was showing an

increasingly unfavourable downward trend, worsened by the poor return on the large-scale investment in the agricultural sector, and the need to develop the inhospitable northern and eastern regions in order to secure supplies of raw materials and fuel.

In these circumstances, inflationary pressures mounted. Experiencing difficulties in attracting and keeping workers, factory managers were increasingly lax in their interpretation of the rules for wage and bonus payments, with the result that in some industries pay grew faster than labour productivity. With earnings outstripping the growth of output of consumer goods, savings accumulated and conditions were created fostering the expansion of the 'second economy' — the acquisition of goods and services 'on the side', 'under the counter' and through resort to bribery and corruption. The position was made worse by the apparent lack of energy and resolution on the part of the Brezhnev leadership, which was reluctant to acknowledge the extent to which all was not well.

On the economic front, the party under Andropov appears to have been pursuing a two-stage strategy. With the aim of improving short term economic performance and the general moral climate in the country, there has been a concerted drive for greater discipline at all levels and the rooting out of corruption and second economy activities. The necessity for a 'business-like' approach is now constantly stressed. Meanwhile, discussion on ways of improving the planning and management of the economy intensified with much more frank recognition of the seriousness of the problems to be tackled. Some practical measures were adopted, including an economic experiment in several industrial ministries, which began in January this year. With the aim of promoting 'socialist entrepreneurship' in the pursuit of higher productivity and greater efficiency, the obligatory planning indicators for the enterprise have been simplified and reduced in number, and the rewards for good performance (and penalties for failure) enhanced.

If successful, the main features of the experimental system will be generalised for the next five-year plan beginning in 1986. In 1983 the economy showed signs of real improvement: national income grew by just over 3% and industrial output by 4%. The consumer supply situation improved and the harvest was the best for a number of years. This positive trend has been maintained into 1984. In January industry grew by 5.2%, and 94% of the growth was

achieved through higher productivity; for the latter, one of the best results ever achieved.

In his last political statement in December, Andropov indicated that wide-ranging discussion of measures to improve the performance of the economy should continue. While all economists seem to agree that more changes are needed if the economy is truly to shift to an intensive growth path, there is no consensus on what should be done. Ideas being promoted include the need for still greater enterprise autonomy, the dismantling of much of the traditional administered supply system, changes in the organisational structure of the economy to reduce the power of the industrial ministries and promote greater horizontal cooperation, and some extension of private activities, notably the service sector.

But it is clear that the essential features of the system of central planning are not in question. The term 'economic reform', implying the need for a radical transformation of the entire system of economic management, with potential political implications, has not been used. Despite speculation in the Western press, there is no evidence that the Soviet Union is considering the adoption of a Hungarian-type economic reform. (Indeed, it is highly debatable whether such a reform is at all appropriate to the very different circumstances of the Soviet economy). Meanwhile, there have been signs of the party leadership's growing impatience with the economists for their apparent inability to come up with practical solutions and, significantly, one of the first post-Andropov measures has been the adoption of a central committee resolution sharply critical of the Academy of Science's Institute of Economics.

Another development of potential importance has been the process of renewal of personnel at all levels following an unprecedentedly long period of cadre stability. Not only have new faces appeared in the politburo and secretariat, but quite a substantial number of ministers and regional party heads have been replaced, in the main by men (no new women in leading posts) in their fifties. Restaffing has also affected the central committee apparatus: significant changes include the formation of a strengthened economic department under Ryzhkov(54), an experienced former enterprise director and planning official, and the replacement as head of the Science and Education Department of S P Trapeznikov(72), a long time associate of Brezhnev, by V A Medvedev(55), an

economist and previously rector of the party's Academy of Social Sciences. The process is likely to continue in so far as there are still many leading party and government officials in their seventies; one minister of a strategically important industry is now 85. Other positive changes included the regular publication of summary accounts of the weekly politburo deliberations, the initiation of moves towards the clearer demarcation of the spheres of competence of party and state bodies, the enhancement of the role and rights of work brigades and collectives, representing some extension of shopfloor involvement in management, and the non-appearance of a cult of personality of Andropov himself, in significant contrast to the late Brezhnev period.

The appointment of Andropov offered real opportunities for improving the international climate. Reagan, Thatcher and other NATO leaders blew them away in a gale of vituperative rhetoric. The spiralling arms race has taken another turn, the hands of the clock have edged closer to midnight and the Soviet leadership may now believe that it has no choice but to further strengthen the country's military might. The CIA and NATO now acknowledge that since 1976 the rate of expansion of Soviet defence expenditure has been half that originally estimated; it declined more or less in step with the falling rate of growth of national income.

To the extent that defence expenditure is now increased, the task of improving the performance of the economy and raising living standards will be made more difficult. But despite its current problems, the Soviet economy still has substantial underlying strengths and reserves, and any calculation that it can be pushed into crisis through external pressure is profoundly mistaken. On the contrary, historical experience suggests that such pressure will serve to intensify the resolve and energy with which internal problems are tackled.

Soviet leaders now refer guardedly to the 'difficulties' of the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is to Andropov's credit that in his brief period of office the drift of Soviet society was halted and a sense of forward movement restored. The Soviet people will expect his successor to continue on the same path.

Julian Cooper

### TRAINING FOR JOBS?

The Tories' recently-published second white paper on training policy, *Training for Jobs*, has provoked a storm of protest, even

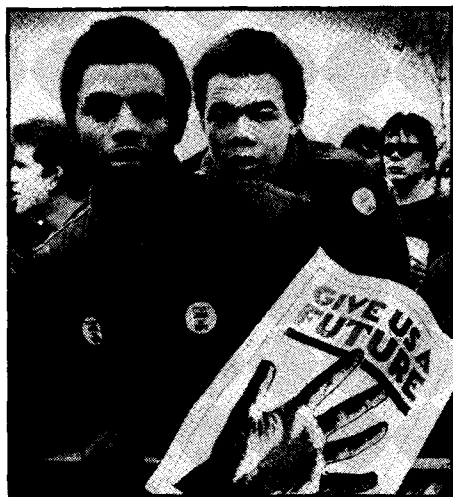
where there has previously been support for the Government's free-market policies. The rhetoric of the white paper, punctuated by statements conjuring up the 'modernisation of training in occupational skills', 'retraining', and 'updating skills', expresses a certain vision of the future of work. But the questions remain 'jobs for whom?', 'what kind of training and for what kind of jobs', and, more generally, 'what is the future of work?'

Behind the Government's vision of work, lies a broader vision of a laissez-faire, free for all, market economy. As well as training for technological change, stress is placed on small business development, self-employment, individual initiatives, and a training programme geared towards meeting the demands of the market. Alongside this is an emphasis on the regulation of the workforce into accepting low pay as a necessary condition for the survival of the economy. Such a policy informs the Youth Training Schemes, the MSC's Community Programme Scheme with its £60 average weekly wage, and the Young Workers' Scheme which offers an incentive to employers to pay £50 or less per week.

Since the late 1970s, when the MSC began to specialise in unemployment palliatives, a growing share of further education courses has been MSC-funded and controlled. This trend has been particularly marked in recession-hit areas, where employer-sponsored courses have almost disappeared, and the MSC has moved in. At present the MSC is believed to spend about £90m on Non-Advanced Further Education (NAFE) in England and Wales. The white paper proposes that this sum should rise by 1986/87 to £200m (about 25% of total NAFE) with consequent reductions in local authority expenditure and control. It is this which led Sir Jack Smart, chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, to denounce the white paper as 'a unilateral act of imperialism'.

However there are many other aspects of the Government's proposals which need a critical response. Above all, the white paper is about making training and vocational education more 'financially attractive' to employers. Wages and allowances are to be held down. The wage-cutting Young Workers Scheme will be restricted to 17 year olds, so that employers will be encouraged to have their 16 year-olds free on YTS and their 17 year-olds cheap on YWS. Adults will be encouraged to pay for their own retraining through a new loans scheme. Employers, who have never taken training seriously in

Britain, are to be given control over quality and standards and allowed to buy what they want from further education and public training agencies. This makes a mockery of the Government/MSC claim to be moving towards a standards-based training system. It also poses new threats to further education and to those Industrial Training Boards which survived the first round of closures. With the Engineering ITB under attack by Ford, the outlook seems bleak for ITBs.



As far as skill training is concerned, the Government intends to concentrate exclusively on the low quality and largely pre-vocational Youth Training Scheme. Everything else is to be left to the same employers who have failed so miserably in the past. The Government's insistence on the 'market led' approach is raising widespread doubts about the appropriateness of these policies to a modern economy.

A central question posed by the Government's proposals is 'jobs for whom?' This question is prompted by the failure of the white paper to address the issue of women's and ethnic minorities' needs and interests. Indeed, implicit in the proposals for training is the reproduction of discrimination. With the onus placed on employers to take decisions 'as to who is trained, when and in what skills', existing discriminatory practices in relation to employment are likely to continue. The provision of technical and vocational education for all 14-18 year olds, and the reshaping of further education courses towards science and technology, does nothing to challenge traditional stereotyping. It is unlikely, without a programme of positive action, that girls will take advantage of the new curriculum.<sup>1</sup> With the stress placed on training those already in employment, through retraining and updating skills, women, ethnic minorities, the

disabled and the unemployed generally, will suffer further discrimination.

Indeed, there is a failure within the white paper to address the unemployed in any concrete way. Though it is the role of the MSC to 'where necessary . . . provide help for training the unemployed', there is little in the report to suggest how this will be done, apart from basic training, training for those facing redundancy, and training in small business development. Alongside this, the unemployed are further hampered by the cut-back in adult education provision. Short-term, low-cost training does, of course, raise crucial questions concerning the unemployed. But in order realistically to offer re-entry into the labour market, a longer-term programme of training is necessary.

There are alternatives to the Government's programme in relation to training. Some local authorities are taking significant initiatives in building training programmes designed to offer opportunities to women and ethnic groups. The GLC, for example, spends more on women's training in London than the MSC does nationally.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the Government's approach, these local initiatives help people acquire high quality skills and are accompanied by programmes of job creation.

Wendy Bradshaw John Fairley

## ITALIAN UNIONS

The first socialist prime minister in Italian history, Bettino Craxi, has achieved a remarkable feat: in February, by issuing a decree revising unilaterally the *scala mobile*, thereby reducing the amount of protection it offered against price rises by between 10-20%, he precipitated the *de facto* dissolution of the pact of unity which had held together Italy's three trade union federations. The *scala mobile* was a long-standing arrangement dating from 1946 indexing wages to prices. By 1975 the *scala mobile* had acquired its modern, progressive form: each percentage increase in prices would result in a flat rate increase for all workers. The quantitative consequences of this are that the higher the rate of inflation, the greater will be the reduction in the differentials between workers.

This egalitarian system had been under challenge for a long time. The employers' association, which was party to the agreement, blamed Italy's poor economic performance on the inflationary effects of the *scala mobile*. In January 1983, after lengthy negotiations, the degree of protection offered by indexation was reduced. Sufficient tax and family benefits were

offered to obtain the consent of the three trade union federations: the CGIL (communists and socialists), the CISL (Catholics) and the UIL (social-democrats, socialists and republicans).

The agreement of January 1983 was criticised because of its neo-corporative tripartite nature: it was achieved at the top and did not involve the rank and file. Others saw in the agreement an authentic social contract. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was distinctly cool. In its view the revision of the *scala mobile* should have occurred only in a different political context: namely radical reforms and an overall change in economic development, rather than deflationary policies and the growth of anti-communism. The PCI's reluctance was also due to the fact that a tripartite agreement leaves the opposition out in the cold because it by-passes Parliament and creates another major centre of decision-making. In a system, such as the British one, in which the opposition sooner or later gets to be the government, tripartitism has fewer defects than in Italy where, for historical reasons, the PCI has been excluded from government.

The CGIL could not have accepted this year's reduction in the degree of protection offered by the *scala mobile* without obtaining some very tangible benefits: a tax reform, price control in the public sector and a boost in employment. The UIL had a different attitude: its members tend to be the better-off workers. A reduction in the *scala mobile* would increase differentials and therefore benefit their members. Thus the UIL accepted Craxi's unilateral decision. The CISL, to everyone's surprise, accepted it too. The CGIL's opposition meant that the unanimity required for an agreement could not be reached, hence Craxi's unilateral action which was soon accepted not only by the CISL and the UIL but also by the socialist minority in the CGIL. Thus the communists, both as a party and as trade unionists, seemed isolated. Trade union unity was over.

Why did the CISL accept Craxi's *dictat*? Unencumbered by political affiliation, it had no need to support the socialist leader (as had been the case for both UIL and the CGIL socialists). Since the 1960s the CISL had been vociferously 'egalitarian'. Its leader, Pierre Carniti, had based his entire reputation on a militant line bent at reducing differentials (unlike Lama of the CGIL who thought that differentials had

<sup>1</sup>See *Times Educational Supplement*, 24 Feb 1984.

<sup>2</sup>See GLC, TB 96, 2 12 83 Comments on the MSC Corporate Plan, 1983-87.

been sufficiently eroded). From an economic point of view there was no reason for the CISL to go along with Craxi: its members will be worse off at the end of the year, even if the 10% inflation target is reached, and the chances are that inflation will not be below 13%. So the reasons for the CISL's *volte face* must be political. By breaking with the CGIL in a period when trade unions are weak and under attack, the CISL can appear a reasonable and realistic trade union with which the government can negotiate. The government does not have many resources for a deal, but it can give the CISL that legitimacy which all trade unions find more and more difficult to obtain on the shopfloor. With the CGIL 'out in the cold' and the UIL too small the CISL hopes to become the main protagonist of future negotiations with the government.

The CGIL could not have accepted Craxi's proposals without a major *quid pro quo*. Its rank and file, mainly communists, would not have accepted an agreement which decreases their purchasing power and excludes their own political party.

That the CGIL was in no position to alienate itself from its rank and file is evident from the prompt response from the base. The main initiative has not come

from the trade unions but from the factory councils. These shopfloor organisations include all workers irrespective of union affiliation. Thus among the factory council militants who organised the strikes of February and March one finds members of CISL, UIL and CGIL.

The reaction from the base has not only been due to the Craxi decree. It has also been an expression of the frustration felt by many militants at the near-total lack of consultation which has been a feature of the period of negotiations with the government. The exclusion of the base has been the most evident symptom of the increased bureaucratisation and centralism that tripartitism entails.

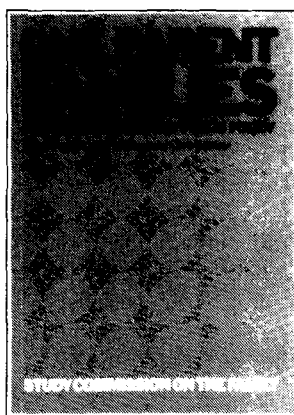
It is unlikely that the widespread strikes will do much to alter the government's decision. This will be seriously challenged by other factors. In the first place many workers will try to obtain through free collective bargaining what they have lost through the reduction of the *scala mobile*. This is something which helps to explain the second thoughts expressed by the employers' associations. Secondly, the decree has got to be accepted by the Italian Parliament and the PCI has promised that it will give battle. It will be able, moreover, to take advantage of the divisions existing

within the Christian Democratic Party (DC).

Thirdly, the DC itself will certainly try to amend the government decree by ensuring that, should inflation be higher than 10%, the workers get something back. The DC is in fact seriously worried about its dwindling popular base. The Socialist Party, whose own working class base is getting rather thin and tends to be made up of older and better-off workers, is determined to become the party of the centre (shades of our own SDP ...), the representative of Italy's growing middle classes. The DC, in practice Italy's second largest working class party, has no wish to let Craxi dominate Italian politics. It has remained rather passive during the period of negotiations over the *scala mobile* and was clearly not overjoyed by Craxi's *dictat*. Now it will try to show that it can change the decree in Parliament, something the PCI cannot really do. On the other hand, the divisions which are plaguing the government coalition and the DC as well as the reaction from the rank and file shows that the PCI is not as isolated as it seemed at first. But all this makes the PCI's strategy of a left-wing alternative to the DC less and less credible.

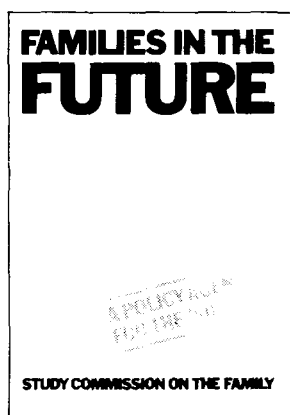
Donald Sassoon

## What is really happening to the family?



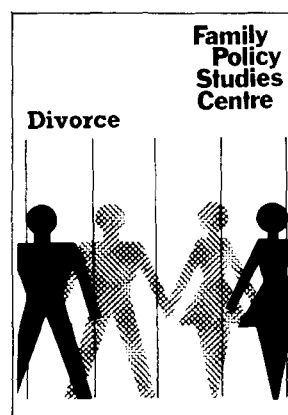
**One-Parent Families**  
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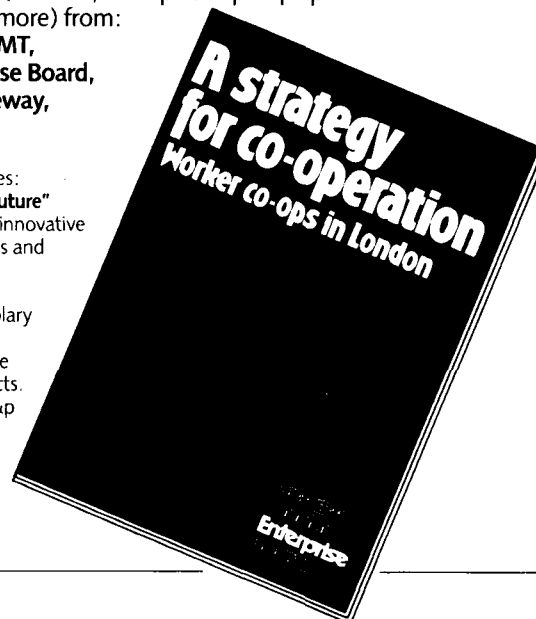
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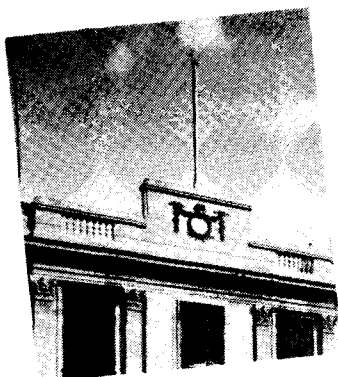


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The future of local government has moved to the centre of the political stage. And the key issue is without doubt the Rates Bill. It will undermine the very principle of local government.

John Stewart

# Storming the Town Halls: a Rate-Cap Revolution



THE RATES BILL that is at present before the House of Commons is the latest in a series of measures taken by the Conservative government to reduce local government expenditure. Since the Government was elected in 1979, there have been five bills introduced on local government finance, while the grant system itself has been changed at least seven times.

In effect what has been happening since 1979 is that the rules of the game have been changed in attempt after attempt to achieve the cuts that the Government wished. Until the present bill, the Government has used influence rather than control. It preserved the formal right of a local authority to make its own decision on its level of expenditure.

The Government maintained the position as set out by Tom King, the then Minister of State responsible for Local Government in the House of Commons on 8 July 1980:

'When the public funds have been distributed, it is then a matter for individual local authorities and their councillors as to what their expenditure decisions are. It is their choice between services, and their choice as to the rate levels that they decide to impose.

That is the freedom and discretion that exists in local government. It is this partnership: public, ministerial and parliamentary responsibility for the public funds, the national taxpayers' funds, paid to local government: the local councillors' responsibility for the final rating decisions and the expenditure of their own local authority. That is the basis on which the local government and central government partnership exists. We each have our responsibility to our own electorates in that respect.'

## Rising penalties

In effect the continuing changes brought about by the Government left the choice both between services and as to rate levels with local authorities, but imposed ever increasing penalties on local authorities whose choice was not in accordance with the Government's wishes. They recognised the formal freedom of local authorities to make their own choice, but tried by changes in the rules of the game to ensure

the nature of that choice. The problem for the Government was that local authorities, given the right to make their own expenditure decisions, continued to do so and to be re-elected on that basis.

The Government in response rapidly increased the penalties imposed on local authorities which did not make the choices wished by central government. In the rate support grant settlement for 1981/1982, the first settlement under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act, 1980, the Government merely imposed an adjustment for those authorities whose expenditure was 10% above their Grant Related Expenditure Assessment (ie, the Government's assessment of their need for expenditure) which meant that for most authorities grant increased as expenditure increased, but not so much as previously.

The rules were changed — not once, but many times — sometimes even during the financial year to which they applied. Targets were introduced requiring reductions in expenditure from all local authorities. At first exemptions were given to authorities spending less than GREA, but then they were abandoned and the penalties became ever more severe. In 1984/1985, the rate support grant settlement provided that an authority spending only 9% above target would lose grant equivalent in value to a 68p rate or in some cases all of their grant. A process of ever increasing penalties had a dynamic of its own. Penalties had to increase to maintain the pressure on local choice.

But still local authorities made their own choices as Tom King had recognised it was their right to do. The Rates Bill finally takes that right away.

## The Rates Bill

The Rates Bill gives the Government a selective power of direct control over the rates, to be implemented immediately against authorities to be designated by the Secretary of State, and a general power over

all authorities to be held in reserve.

If the Bill is passed the Secretary of State will use his powers to designate local authorities in July 1984 with a view to exercising direct control over their rate level in the financial year 1984/1985. He will specify, for each authority designated, the maximum expenditure level for 1984/1985. At the moment he has to act in accordance with principles which have to be the same for all authorities within each class of authorities (eg for all inner London Boroughs). It will in future, however, be for the Secretary of State alone to determine those principles—a remarkable concentration of arbitrary power.

Local authorities designated can ask the Secretary of State to redetermine the level. It will be difficult for them not to do so; otherwise they will be said to have accepted the level without challenge. If however they do ask for that re-determination they open up some very serious dangers.

The Secretary of State, in redetermining the level, can set a higher level, but if he does so 'he may impose on the authority in question such requirements relating to its expenditure or financial management as he thinks appropriate; and it shall be the duty of the authority to comply with any such requirements and to report to the Secretary of State whenever he so directs on the extent to which those requirements have been complied with' (Section 4(6)). Such requirements could presumably specify which expenditure is to be reduced or even which (such as expenditure on the police) is not to be reduced and could specify policy on fares, on rents or on fees and charges. Once an authority has asked for a redetermination central government inevitably becomes involved in the detail of the budget.

The Secretary of State may even redetermine expenditure at a lower level than he originally specified. In doing so he is not bound by the principles he himself has laid down.

The process of budgetary scrutiny involved in redetermination can take up to six months or more. Eventually the Secretary of State will set a maximum rate level for each designated authority, designed—after taking account of the block grant—to achieve his required level of expenditure. In setting that level he can take account of a local authority's financial reserves. He can in effect require a rundown in those reserves substituting his judgement for the judgement of the authority on the basis of financial advice from its Treasurer.

Because it is envisaged that this whole process may take even longer, provision is



made for the Secretary of State to fix an interim maximum rate. In that event the final maximum rate need not be set until after the authority's financial year has begun.

It is only when the final maximum rate is set, that the Secretary of State requires positive House of Commons approval for any of his actions. That approval can be given on a mass production basis, grouping several or indeed all authorities together in the same vote.

### **The rules were changed — not once but many times**

#### **The end of local choices**

The provisions of the Bill represent for authorities to which they are applied the end of local choice on expenditure and taxation, except where that choice is approved of by the Secretary of State. Even where a local electorate chooses a council committed to higher levels of local expenditure and local taxation, that choice can be over-riden by the Secretary of State.

That is the fundamental change. As we have seen, up to now, local authorities have been accountable to their own electorate for their decisions on expenditure and taxation. Local authorities have been given local taxes, not in order to make central government's decisions, but to make their own decisions. Otherwise they would have been made wholly dependent on grant.

There have always been local authorities which have spent less and local authorities which have spent more than central government probably wished. That is not surprising. For that is what local government has been about. Indeed, if instead of allegedly 'over-spending' and allegedly

'under-spending' authorities (and there are both), all local authorities spent exactly what the government wanted, then there would be a real question mark over the case for local authorities, local elections and local taxes.

In effect in the Rates Bill the Government is taking the power to limit local choice in designated authorities to a choice that it approves of. Local councils and local electorates will be unable to choose, as up to now they have been free to choose, collective public goods rather than private goods. It is the limit on local choice that underlies the Rates Bill.

In place of local choice will be the decision of the Secretary of State, who is seeking in the Bill remarkably unconstrained power. He can act in accordance with principles he himself lays down and which if at a later stage he finds inconvenient, he can then abandon.

It is only after the possibly detailed and extended involvement of the Secretary of State (or his officials) in the budgetary process of the local authority, that at the final stage, the approval of the House of Commons is required. Even though the House is then being asked to substitute its judgement for the judgement of a locally elected council on its budgetary choice, there is no provision for a detailed consideration. The order placed before the House may require the approval of 5 or 20 or 50 local authorities' budgets, on the basis of a few hours debate.

In the first year I would expect the power to be used only against a small number of authorities. It is probable too that these powers will be used to enforce reductions of not more than 4% or 5%. They will be set at a level which in the first year will be attainable without critical effects. The major effects will be seen in later years. It is

as year follows year that the percentage cut will increase and the number of authorities will grow.

#### **A handful of authorities?**

The Government will argue that they will only use their powers against a handful of authorities. Even if that were true the principle of local choice would be overthrown. There is however no such restriction in the Bill. What matters in judging the impact of legislation is not what is said by ministers, but what is said in what will eventually become the Act.

Past experience of central-local relations shows that powers once given will be used to the full. We have already seen how the block grant system introduced under the Local Government Planning and Land Act has been transformed out of all recognition in three short years.

### **In place of local choice will be the decision of the Secretary of State who is seeking in the Bill remarkably unconstrained power**

The Bill itself gives no indication that the powers provided will only be used against a handful of authorities. The only restriction placed on the use of the selective powers is that authorities will not be designated if their level of expenditure is below GREa or below £10 million. The level of GREa is however determined by the Secretary of State. The level of £10 million will itself be eroded by the on-going process of inflation which will bring more authorities within

the scope of the Act. In effect this provision exempts most shire districts and was probably introduced to reduce opposition to the Bill. The Secretary of State can propose the raising of the level, but one suspects that once the Bill becomes an Act there will be little incentive for him to do so. The only restrictions imposed by the Bill are in effect capable of adjustment by the Secretary of State.

Even with those restrictions, however, there is nothing to stop the selective powers being applied to far more than a handful of authorities.

In any event the Bill also contains general powers, which apply rate-limitation to all authorities without restriction. Those powers are held in reserve, only to be introduced by affirmative resolution both of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. If there is no intention to use these powers, it is difficult to understand why they are in the Bill. Reserve powers can be turned into substantive powers on the basis of a single vote in each House. By that time the principle will already have been conceded and such a vote can be obtained without the detailed scrutiny required for legislation.

Either by an extension of the selective powers or by the introduction of the general powers, the provisions of the Bill can be extended to far more than the 15-20 authorities currently spoken of.

#### **Why the new powers?**

A Conservative government committed by party tradition to local government has introduced legislation which represents a fundamental weakening of the position of local authorities. For the first time the Government will have the power of direct

control over local authorities' expenditure and taxation policies.

The first reason for this apparent reversal of position lies in the commitment to abolish the domestic rate first set out in the 1974 Conservative election manifesto. That commitment was repeated in the 1979 manifesto with the safeguard that it might not be possible to implement the commitment in that parliament. As the next general election approached with the pledge unfulfilled, it became necessary for the

### **Past experience of central-local relations shows that powers once given will be used to the full**

Government to clarify its position.

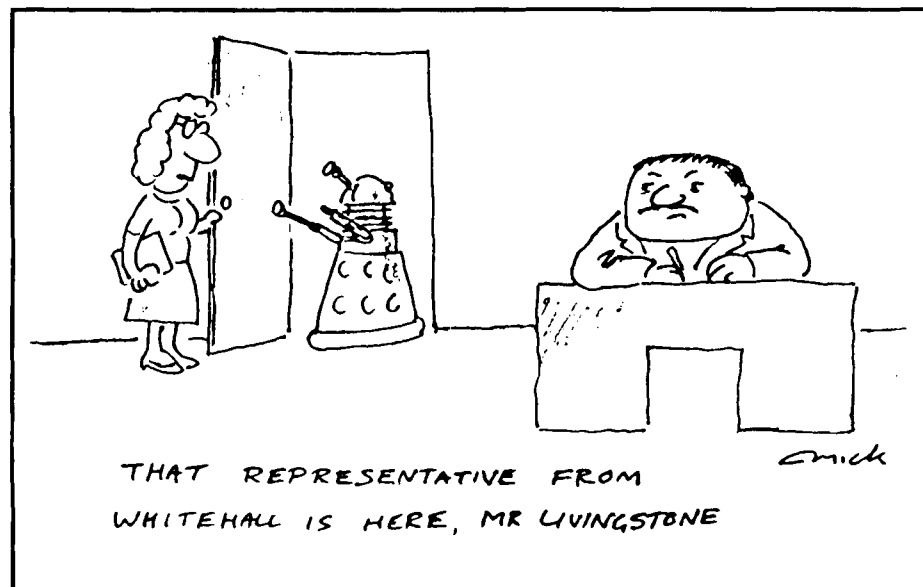
The prolonged consideration by cabinet sub-committees following the publication in 1981 of the Green Paper on Alternatives to the Domestic Rates (Cmnd 8449) had failed to find an alternative satisfactory to the Government, largely because it had ruled out of court the alternative of a local income tax, at least in part because of the Government's commitment to reduce income tax (and a commitment to replace the domestic rates by a local income tax could involve an increase of at least 5p in the £).

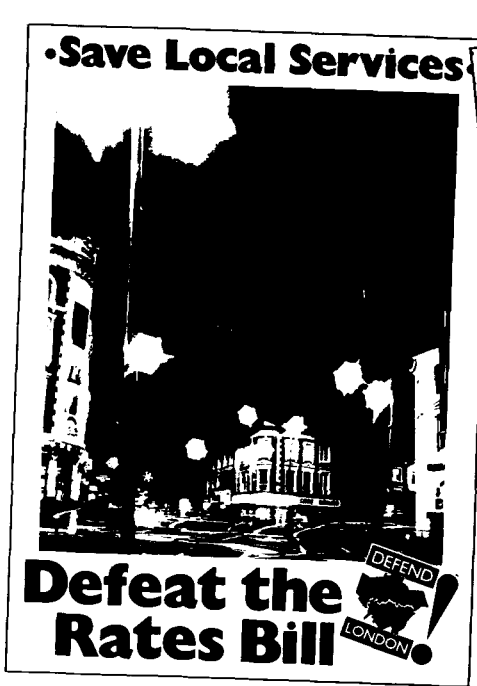
In the last few days before the general election was announced, the cabinet adopted the proposal that it had already rejected on several occasions, the proposal for rate limitation. It was then inserted in the manifesto and became a government commitment.

#### **The confusion of local government finance**

The second reason lies in the present system of local government finance. The White Paper on Rates (Cmnd 9008) identified that only 22% of local government expenditure (net of fees and charges) is borne by the domestic rates which is the only tax that bears clearly on the local electorate.

The Layfield Committee on Local Government Finance (Cmnd 6453) argued in 1976 that there was a basic confusion in local government finance as to where responsibility lay, due to the over-dependence on central government grant. That confusion could only be resolved by a choice between a system based on central accountability or a system based on local accountability. The latter demanded fundamental change through the introduction of a local income tax to replace the degree





of dependence on government grant.

The then Labour government did not face up to the choice. Since then the Conservative government has been moving the system towards central accountability without facing up to the consequences of that decision. They want to force local authorities to bear the responsibility for cuts that are not of their own making.

### For the first time the Government will have the power of direct control over local authorities expenditure and taxation policies

**The unitary state of concentrated power**  
The third reason underlies that rejection. It is in the nature of present day Conservatism which far from seeing the existence of strong local government expressing local choice as desirable, sees instead local authority's power of local choice as a challenge to the authority of central government.

To understand the philosophy of the present Conservative government it is important not to be misled by the rhetoric of rolling back the power of the state: it is a rolling back in certain sectors only. There is a further important element that emphasises the authority of central government. Any other source of political authority, however limited and constrained, is seen as a challenge to that authority.

It is in this context that one must interpret the continual emphasis by the Government on the unitary state. 'But we live in a unitary and not a federal state. Although local authorities are responsible to their electorates, they derive their powers from parliament' (White Paper on Rates, Cmnd 9008). That is true, but parliament has previously seen it necessary to provide for diffusion of power in the unitary state rather than a unitary state of concentrated power.

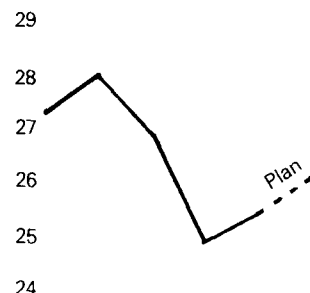
It is argued that the exercise by local authorities of powers given them by parliament is improper if contrary to the views of the Government. 'There can be no room in our unitary state for unilateral declarations of independence by individual local authorities, relying on claims of a local mandate' (speech by Patrick Jenkin, 14 September 1983). But local authorities have not claimed independence, only the right to pursue their own policies within the law.

Or again, 'We live in a unitary state. Parliament is supreme and has granted local government its powers. The national mandate is superior and must be observed. I put it to you that this is the constitutional position' (speech by Patrick Jenkin, 16 November 1983). If this means that legislation carried by parliament is supreme that correctly states the constitutional position. The doctrine is however extended beyond legislation to policy. In the unitary state, it would seem, there is one politics and one policy. The point was expressed well in a House of Lords debate by the former Labour minister Michael Stewart:



27 MAY 1983  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHRONICLE

Local Government as % of public spending (UK)



(spending — current & capital as % of public spending)

**ABOVE, how local government spending has been cut in the past four years.**

'We have all understood for a long time that a local authority must obey the law; that the law lays down certain rules to what it may or may not do, and it neither can disobey them nor ought to attempt to do so. Now we are putting forward the doctrine that in addition to that, they must not only respect the law but the general political outlook of the central government.

... The doctrine that it has always been the duty of local authorities to fall in with the general political philosophy of central government has no basis in our history, and nor does it make sense. It is quite often a good thing for central governments to have their authority and their policies challenged within the limits of the law, by powerful local authorities. It is one of the things that makes us a democracy' (House of Lords Debates 15/2/1982 Cols 297-8).

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### **In the unitary state, it would seem, there is one politics and one policy**

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I quote this speech because it challenges the assumptions in the Thatcherite doctrine of the unitary state which in turn reflects a wider government philosophy. It is the same doctrine that probably underlies the proposed abolition of the Great London Council and metropolitan counties without any adequate investigation of the problems and issues of metropolitan government. It is almost as if they are being abolished because of what their leaders have said, rather than for any other consideration. The leaderships of those authorities have been seen as a challenge to the unitary state, because their voices achieved national publicity. In the unitary state it would seem there is room for only one view in government.

The doctrine of the unitary state provides the basis for both proposals as it unites them in the same period of time.

#### **White Paper cuts**

Finally it is necessary to look at the nature of the public expenditure policies which it is argued that parliament has approved (although not legislated for) but local authorities have not carried out.

The whole process leading to the alleged targets for local government expenditure is a strange one. It gives ministers facing demands for cuts a choice between cutting expenditure which is their own direct departmental responsibility and cuts in local government expenditure, knowing that 'irresponsible' local authorities need not accept the cuts. It is hardly surprising that the main cuts have been imposed on the national figures for local government

expenditure. It is however the failure to meet those cuts that is the main rationale for the new rates proposal. 'But in England, local authorities' budgets for 1983-4 show current expenditure . . . that is not less than 12% higher than the planned total first proposed for that year in Cmnd 7841' ie, the Conservative government's original White Paper on Public Expenditure (White Paper on Rates Cmnd 9008 para 127).

The problem remains. In the recently published White Paper (Cmnd 9143), the Government has proposed what is in effect a cut in what is defined as 'local authority current expenditure relevant for rate support grant' by 1986/7 of between £2 billion and £2½ billion or more than 10% in England and Wales, with an implication of a further cut to come.

This is no leak, but the Government's stated intention. The remarkable feature is that it has been so little commented on. Perhaps the phrase 'local government expenditure' conceals the reality that the expenditure is on schools, libraries, the fire service, the care of the aged, etc. But that is not concealed in the White Paper.

It may well be that because the real decision has lain with local authorities responsible to their local communities, nobody has believed it will happen. Those targets, however arrived at, are a further reason for the Rates Bill. They are the targets the cabinet is now committed to achieving and the Rates Bill once enacted gives the cabinet the power it requires.

Of course the use of selective powers against a handful of authorities will not achieve those reductions. It is unlikely that a reduction of more than £150 million can be achieved from those authorities in any one year. By 1986/7 that will amount to only £450 million per annum. The difference between the cut required of more than £2 billion and this £450 million is the reason why the government needs the general powers and will use them if it obtains them.

#### **The opposition**

The opposition to the proposals is widespread. The Labour Party, on the left and the right, is united against the proposals; or, in this context, it may be more relevant to highlight the unity between the centralists, many of them in parliament, and the localists, more often to be found in local authorities.

There is powerful trade union opposition and also from the new phenomenon in local government of campaign organisations, of which the most significant is the Local Government Campaign Unit.

The opposition extends beyond the labour movement however. Both the Alliance parties are strongly opposed to the legislation. Significant has been the powerful opposition to the proposals from not merely the *Guardian*, but also the *Times* and the *Financial Times*. There is also the opposition in the Conservative Party which resulted in 13 MPs voting against, and at least the same number abstaining, on the second reading.

The analysis of the reasons for the proposals accounts also for the extent of the opposition in the Conservative Party. All those within the Conservative Party who have believed in a unitary state of diffused power are naturally troubled by the Government's emphasis on a unitary state of concentrated power. As Edward Heath, perhaps a little improbably said, 'I entered the House in 1950 having fought an election on Mr Churchill's theme that we were to set the people free. The theme was not to set the people free to do what we tell them but to set the people free.' (House of Commons debates 17/1/1984 Col 184).

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### **There is a strong Conservative tradition of local government well represented by the impressive opposition of the leadership of the Conservative controlled Local Authority Associations**

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There is a strong Conservative tradition of local government well represented by the impressive opposition of the leadership of the Conservative controlled Local Authority Associations. That leadership is naturally concerned at the apparent reversal of traditional Conservative defence of local government and worried at the precedent for future intervention by socialist governments.

Finally there is a deep concern about the scale of cuts being demanded of local authorities and fears that this must affect all authorities and the use of the general powers. In rural Conservatism in particular, there is a paternalism of approach that sees a limit to the scale of cuts and is aware that cuts made on paper at the centre have a reality in towns and villages. It is the strength of local government and a sign of the responsibility of councillors that they cannot so easily as central government

protect themselves from the consequences of their action. Local choice is genuine because it is choice seen and felt.

### House of Lords

Despite the extent of the opposition, the Bill will undoubtedly pass the House of Commons. Prospect of its defeat rests upon the House of Lords, which can put campaigners in the labour movement in the strange position of placing their hopes on that House.

The constitutional nature of the issues involved, the confused state of local government finance and the ill-considered nature of the proposal make a classic case for the House of Lords exercising their delaying powers. The House of Lords cannot under the Parliament Act defeat legislation introduced so early in a Parliament. They can only delay it, but that is what is required to make the Government think again. To that extent the fact that it is a manifesto commitment is not relevant. The Government have time enough to implement that commitment or better still to start all-party discussions on a real solution to the problems of local government finance.

Those opposed must continue to campaign with that forum in focus, for it is

in the House of Lords that the legislation can be stopped in this present session. That is the political reality.

Two points must be made about the campaign. The issues raised by the Rates Bill are now before parliament. The metropolitan counties and the Greater London Council question will not be fully before parliament until the next session, although the strange Bill abolishing the GLC and metropolitan counties will be taken in this session. The primary campaign is therefore the Rates Bill. It is also the most important issue. If that Bill is passed, the GLC and the metropolitan counties would lose their ability to act as effective local authorities.

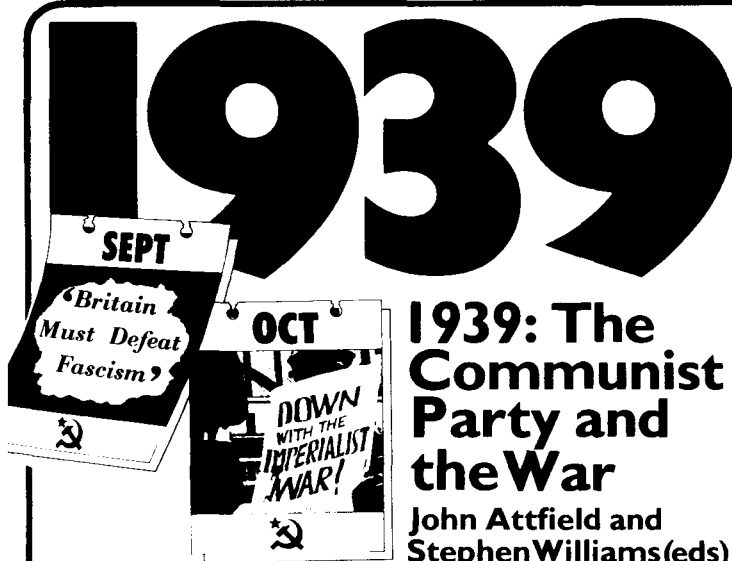
The other point that must be made is that the campaign has not yet succeeded in bringing home to many local authority workers and even more to the public the scale of cuts that lie behind the proposal. While it is right in the campaign to emphasise the constitutional issue, the question of the scale of cuts involved should not be ignored. The two are related. There is after all no way that local authorities controlled by any party would make cuts on that scale. They are after all accountable to their local electorate. It is that accountability that is under challenge.

### Conclusions

The Rates Bill has raised important issues about the nature of our system of government and the role of local government within it. The Labour Party has been cast for the role of defender of local government and local choice.

That may involve some reconsideration by the Labour Party and the labour movement of its past position. National change implemented through legislation has dominated the past. It has led to an over-centralisation in thought and in action. It has led to over-dependence on the ministerial model of political change.

The present defence of local government should be matched by a positive reconsideration of its role. It is not sufficient to defend the present. Responsibilities, finance, structure, functioning and working may all need to be reconsidered if local government is to be rebuilt after the experience of recent years. That can only be achieved by a labour movement that recognises the limitations of centralisation. While there are certain tasks that can only be achieved by central government, there are limits to what should be achieved and by what can be achieved by central government alone. □



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At last Egypt seems to be on the move again. But it is unlikely to go very far.

Chris Mowles

# The Egyptian Enigma

*'I don't claim to be the leader of the Arab and Islamic worlds, but neither I nor anyone else can deny that Egypt, with its people, civilisation, language, will, knowledge and al-Azhar (university) is such a leader.'*<sup>1</sup>

In a peculiarly Egyptian turn of phrase, 'no one can deny . . .', Sadat neatly summed up the geo-political and cultural importance of Egypt to the region. In addition, his description of Egypt helps to explain the extent of interest of observers of the Middle East concerning Mubarak's recent pronouncements on the Palestinians and his moves towards political change at home. The sphinx appears to be waking after a two-and-a-half year sleep.

Not that Palestinians, or even Egyptians, expect the ponderous Hosni Mubarak to emulate the dramatic rough and tumble of the Sadat years, but the effect of initiatives from Egypt is considerable. Witness, for example, the result of Egypt's signing the Camp David accords — at one stroke Israel found that it had neutralised its most powerful enemy, the splits in the Arab world increased leaving Egypt ostracised, and the Palestinians were deprived of their most weighty defenders (though there is no correlation between weight and seriousness of intent).

## Egypt and the PLO

Mubarak continues to struggle under the burden of Sadat's legacies, both externally and at home. However, there are changes afoot, on paper at least. In foreign affairs the President has stuck his head above the parapet: Egypt has been more open in its support of the Palestinians in the last year than it has at any time in the last ten. In detail this has ranged from Minister of Defence Kamal Hasan Ali offering transport for Arafat's flight from Tripoli, to Mubarak calling once more upon President Reagan to institute direct dialogue with the PLO in pursuit of a resolution to the Middle East problem.<sup>2</sup> Despite Mubarak's public refusal to rescind the agreement with Israel, he is thought privately to

consider the accord a dead letter — Israeli/Egyptian relations have been virtually frozen since the invasion of Lebanon.

There was no small amount of political perspicuity on Mubarak's part in securing the meeting with Arafat in Cairo after a period when Syria had overplayed its hand in its open backing of the Fatah rebels. This enabled Egypt to steal the march on the Syrians, which must have been particularly galling for President Assad, given Syria and Egypt's long-standing struggle for leadership of the Arab world, and earned Egypt a PLO vote during the recent decision of the Islamic Conference to invite Egypt to rejoin its ranks. Although not as important a body as the Arab League for Egypt, the country's re-entry to the Islamic fold may mark the first stage of its rehabilitation with the Arabs. There is now talk of Egypt taking part in trilateral talks with Jordan and the PLO sometime in March or April to consider the problem of the Palestinians.

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Closer to an Egyptian's heart,  
two out of every five  
loaves are now baked with  
American wheat

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## Pluralism

Internally, again on paper, the changes are manifest: Mubarak has stated his intention of coming to grips with Egypt's crippling debts and inflation, and has promised to root out the corruption that is rife throughout the Egyptian bureaucracy. The government has instituted a five-year economic programme, the first to be implemented since the second post-revolutionary five year economic plan foundered in 1965, which is designed to encourage home production, particularly in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Egypt is currently enjoying unprecedented press freedom, and a general election is scheduled for May 27. In addition, a Supreme Court ruling recently gave

permission for the New Wafd to function as a legal political party: the New Wafd has its roots in the pre-revolutionary Wafd party, which battled with the British occupation to wrest Egyptian independence. The reconstituting of the New Wafd is a significant step towards political pluralism, given that when the party tried to reform in 1978 it had to close down after four months of continuous vitriolic attack from President Sadat. The nature of the threat to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), of which Mubarak is chairman, is that the New Wafd claims the centre ground of Egyptian politics, also claimed by the NDP, and seems to exercise wide political support from the Egyptian populace.

## American dependence

Despite the potential of current changes inside Egypt and concerning Egypt's regional influence, there are serious constraints on Mubarak's manoeuvrability, not the least of which is Egypt's economic and military dependence on the United States. Rather than being a fetish of the Egyptian Left, Egyptian dependence on the US is an economic and military fact: US exports to Egypt in 1982 totalled \$2.9 billion<sup>3</sup>, many of which were financed by the US economic and military assistance programmes. This places Egypt second only to Israel as the largest recipient of US aid. Before the 1973 war America's attitude to the two countries would hardly have been described as even-handed. However, after the expulsion of Soviet technicians and advisers in 1972, and the unexpected advent of the October war, Sadat was free to seek the mediation and support of the US. Since this time, America has pursued a vigorous ideological line towards Egypt, summed up by David Rockefeller:

*'I think that Egypt has come to realise that socialism and extreme Arab nationalism have not helped the lot of the 37 million people they have in Egypt.'*<sup>4</sup>

After ten years of American presence and support Egypt has a generation of US-trained military officers and university

teachers, and the Egyptian army has recently completed its second round of military manoeuvres with the US regional task force, code-named Operation Bright Star. A preponderance of US-trained technicians and academics can have no small effect on the policy-making capacity of the Egyptian regime. Closer to an Egyptian's heart, two out of every five loaves are now baked with American wheat.

The question must remain as to how much influence Egypt can expect to exert on an intransigent America which refuses to recognise the PLO, which signed a multi-million dollar accord with Israel during Shamir's visit to Washington in December, and which has historically and virtually unquestioningly supported Israel since its creation, while Egypt is dependent upon the US for bread and bullets. In the immediate future, Egypt can expect very little from President Reagan this side of the American elections. Despite Egypt's current diplomatic estrangement from Israel, how far could Egypt expect to distance itself from Camp David, given that it is an American-brokered accord? Even if Egypt,

once radical leader of the Arab world and scourge of imperialist powers, did find its way back among Arab brothers, it would join firmly with the 'moderates' most of whom have close alliances with the US.

Just as dependence upon the United States was a legacy bequeathed by Sadat, so are the constraints placed on Mubarak affecting internal political and economic development, the historical roots of which are as follows.

#### Sadat's *Infitah*

After Sadat had enhanced his political position with the performance of the Egyptian army in the 1973 war, he attempted to consolidate his political power at home with political and economic reform. This was an attempt to form his own political constituency. The package of reforms presented to the Egyptian people in 1974 was called the 'October Paper', directly making the link between forthcoming change and the recent success of the President in the October war. The most significant aspect of the October Paper was the role that it created for private capital within the economy, a direct break with the

state capitalism of the Nasser years. Law 43, an obligingly vague document, set out the regime's interpretation of *Infitah*, or the 'opening up', of the Egyptian economy to foreign capital. Simplistically, it put forward the equation that Arab capital combined with Western technology and Egyptian labour would produce development. Foreign firms were tempted to participate in the Egyptian economy by being offered tax concessions — there were also plans for free trading zones, which would charge no tax on business transactions provided that no goods found their way on to the Egyptian market.

Economically *Infitah* was not a success under Sadat, with foreign businesses failing to be attracted to Egypt in sufficient numbers. Taking the figures for 1979, 65% of all *Infitah* projects were in services and distribution, with 41% of capital commitments to the enterprises coming from Egypt.<sup>5</sup> The sectors of the economy which showed the fastest growth were the import/export and construction sectors. Almost overnight import millionaires and wealthy entrepreneurs burgeoned. The political consequences of *Infitah* far outweighed the economic significance — Sadat had given the numerically small but vociferous middle classes their head; these people had found the last years of Nasser, with their political repression and economic stagnation, suffocating and were straining for liberalisation. Faced with the choice of accelerating Egypt's socialist plan, which had foundered under Nasser, or diversifying away from it, Sadat followed his personal instincts, and gave free rein to liberalisation. At the same time Sadat instituted a return to parliamentary democracy as part of his policy of erecting a 'state of institutions' to guard against what many people saw as the arbitrary exercise of power by the few under Nasser. In this way he distanced himself from Nasser both politically and economically.

#### Impact of liberalisation

As could be expected, economic liberalisation was not in the best interest of the broad mass of Egyptians. Accompanying the deluge of consumer durables in the Sadat years was a widening rift between rich and



Sadat (right) and Mubarak (left)

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Ahram* 29/1/80.

<sup>2</sup> *International Herald Tribune* 15/2/84.

<sup>3</sup> US Embassy in Cairo: economic trends report October 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Interview in *New York Times* 8/2/74.

<sup>5</sup> Nazih Ayubi 'Implementation Capability and Political Feasibility of the Open Door Policy' in *Rich and Poor States* eds Kerr and Yasin (Cairo 1982) p366.

poor, endemic corruption of those in positions of power, and staggering inflation. And the conditions got worse: partial liberalisation of the economy brought about its own dynamic and pressure for more liberalisation, to accord to Egyptian capital the same privileges as had been granted to foreign capital. Not only were privileges so granted, but the regime began to take on the ideological and economic leviathan of the state sector — in 1975 49% of public companies' stock was offered for sale. Latterly, public sector companies were allowed to participate with foreign capital in joint ventures, where they were legally classified as 'private' companies under law 43, and exempted from tax in the same way wholly private ventures would be.

Nor was the agricultural sector excluded from the penetration of private capital — Sadat's regime allowed market forces to dictate the kinds of produce grown by farmers. With an eye on profits and less restricted by relaxed agricultural co-operatives, farmers turned more and more to the production of cash crops to the detriment of staples. While ten years ago Egypt was self-sufficient in food, it now imports nearly 50% of its food requirements; just as one example, Egypt used to be self-sufficient in sugar production but in 1980 it imported 35% of its sugar needs.<sup>6</sup>

One other significant political and economic change under Sadat was the facilitation of Egyptian labourers to work abroad in oil-rich countries. If Arab capital would not come to Egyptian labour, then Egyptian labour would go off in search of Arab capital. The government's attitude to the export of labour was summed up by the President of the Council of Ministers, who stated that Egypt's aim in exporting labour was the same as its reason for exporting rice or cotton.<sup>7</sup> It was the remittances of hard currencies from Egyptians working abroad that allowed the Egyptian economy to sustain the flood of imports and the stagnant export sector; but at the same time, a large number of skilled workers have been removed from the Egyptian labour pool.

#### Mubarak's moves

This, then, is the inheritance weighing down Mubarak: a vigorous class of import/export entrepreneurs and businessmen who have vested interest in servicing the rampant consumerism they have helped to fuel, and a weak economy, crippled by debt and inflation and tied to the world capitalist economy.

The five year economic plan, initiated in 1981/82, has been heralded by the current

regime as addressing itself to these problems *Infitah* has caused the Egyptian economy. But, according to leading economists in Cairo, the plan is extremely tame and does not tackle the central difficulties. Rather than squeeze imports, the plan envisages a programme of import substitution by encouraging the industrial sector, in particular the public sector, to combine with private and foreign capital. Private capital, however, has not always shown itself willing to gravitate towards the production of necessities so much as luxury goods.

The housing plan has been judged totally unrealistic since, again, it relies upon the supposition that 94% of investment will come from private capital. Given the history of private investment in construction since *Infitah*, private capital has only shown itself interested in luxury flats and offices. The planned expansion of the agricultural sector has so far only resulted in the increase of poultry production. However, the plan does not deal with central problems like the collection of income tax, the revenue from which is minimal in relative terms, and which, if tackled seriously, would greatly contribute to solving the problems of the economy.

The obstacle seems to be not so much an economic as a political one: there is no shortage of talented economists in Egypt, many Harvard trained. The regime lacks the political will to antagonise the powerful middle classes who have so greatly benefitted from the liberalisation of the Egyptian economy. Mubarak did not only inherit a plethora of problems, he inherited a political constituency, and he has yet to find his own. He has not distanced himself from Sadat in the way that Sadat differentiated himself from Nasser. The regime never set out to change *Infitah*, but sought, rather, to curb its excesses. The basic thrust of the 'opening up' still seems to accord with the ideological outlook of the regime. This is hardly surprising, since the regime has remained basically intact, despite the removal of Sadat and the recent rhetoric.

#### Memories of militancy

Mubarak can have no doubts that he will have to deal seriously with Egypt's problems because the new class of entrepreneurs are not the only ones claiming the President's ear. When pressed, the Egyptian people have also proved themselves energetic in claiming their rights. A testament to their success is the failure of the Egyptian government to agree

the expected loan from the IMF late last year, which is probably largely due to the IMF's insistence that Egypt decrease its substantial food subsidies. The subsidies have proved the only protection for the Egyptian people against the vicissitudes of the economy and rampant inflation, and memories of the three days of demonstrations that followed the government's sudden price hike of basic commodities in 1977 must still be fresh in the minds of all government ministers. Nor was the uprising aimless — demonstrators systematically burned all the night clubs in the Pyramids road, which had become symbols of the corruption of the Sadat years. They overturned foreign cars, and attacked foreign businesses and banks, shouting: 'Hero of the crossing, where is our breakfast?'<sup>8</sup> Dubbed by the outraged, but shaken, Sadat as 'an uprising of thieves', the demonstration was validated by the Supreme State Security Court at the time of the trial of the demonstrators:

'The government made the mistake of surprising the people with something for which they had not been prepared. They had in fact been expecting the exact opposite — some measure of relief rather than fresh burdens. Their anger was justified.'<sup>9</sup>

What surprised Sadat was that the Egyptian people had expressed a complete lack of confidence both in his handling of the economy, and in the behaviour of parliament in failing to safeguard their interests. Though set up as the 'People's Assembly', the Egyptian parliament had never shown its teeth in protecting the people, and was caught between its failure to protect the people and its failure to please the President. Sadat never learnt to brook criticism, no matter from what quarter, and by the time he was assassinated, most of his critics, from all shades of the political spectrum, were in prison.

#### The litmus paper

Whilst the forthcoming elections in May 1984 promise to be as free and fair as any that have taken place in Egypt, and may well be another step towards Sadat's 'state of institutions', observers inside and outside the country must be wondering whether parliament will really come to represent the people, and if it does, how far the current regime will allow parliamentary democracy to run its course unrestricted.

What relevance parliamentary democracy has for a country where 60% of the population is under voting age and a further 70% are illiterate is a question which remains to be asked. What is certain is that the quality of opposition the government

can expect from the New Wafd will cause them no problems — the Wafd are on record as supporting Camp David and the broad strategy of *Infitah*. There will be no debate about the wisdom of the ascendancy of capital, but rather, about the degree of its ascendancy.

What is more indicative of political pluralism in Egypt is the way the regime deals with the genuine opposition in Egypt, represented, paradoxically enough, by the Left and the Moslem fundamentalists. The Nasserists and Marxists in the National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP), which has also subsumed many of Egypt's communists, are critical of both Camp David and *Infitah*. The party suffered years of harassment under Sadat, and frequently had its party journal, *al-Ahaly*, suspended from publication and the newspaper offices raided. The NPUP is very small, but influential, and *al-Ahaly*, with a circulation of 170,000 and a readership estimated at three times that figure, carries articles from Egypt's leading economists and thinkers. In a by-election in Alexandria on 4 January the Unionist candidate defeated the government candidate by 139 votes to earn the party's first seat in parliament. There can be little doubt that the reason the party failed to

secure a single seat in the 1979 elections is because they were rigged.

President Mubarak has already made personal and public warnings that journalists may go too far in their criticisms, and journalists from *al-Ahaly* are likely to be the first to suffer if there is a crackdown. It is ironic that although Sadat was an ex-Free officer, he was quite clear towards the end of his life what he thought of Nasserism and the NPUP.

'There is no difference between communists and those people who call themselves Nasser's heirs . . . What did Nasser achieve? Is surveillance what you want, expropriation, detention camps, Arab unity the Nasser way?'<sup>10</sup>

The current regime has so far given little indication that its attitude to the National Progressive Unionist Party will be any different from Sadat's.

#### Trust in Allah

Like the Progressive Unionists, the fundamentalists have until recently rejected the government orthodoxy, to the extent of not wanting to participate in elections. Repression of fundamentalist groups after the assassination has now eased, and it appears that the more moderate moslem groups are prepared to stand for election: indeed, the Progressive Unionist

candidate in Alexandria succeeded with the backing of the local fundamentalists. For the fundamentalists to be taking the forthcoming election seriously is an indication of the popular desire for democratic change, and an expectation that the elections will be fair.

So, despite the new Egyptian foreign initiatives and rumblings of change at home, an observer with some knowledge of the heritage of current changes would be justified in expressing scepticism as to their success. Bound by the Americans as much at home as abroad, Mubarak has yet to find a powerful enough base of support and enough personal legitimacy to push through radical change. And if his regime really intends to introduce reform and some amount of pluralism, then the fate of the Left and the fundamentalist groups will be the clearest indication of its intentions. In the meantime, given the constraints on the regime and its political orientation, one can only trust in Allah. □

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Heikal *Autumn of Fury* (London 1982) p220.

<sup>7</sup> Nader Fergany *al-Higra ila'lNaft* (Migration to Oil), (Kuwait 1983) p12.

<sup>8</sup> See the eye-witness account of the uprising in *Sadat* by Hirst and Beeson (London 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Heikal *op cit* p273.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Hirst and Beeson *op cit* p249.

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'...the contradictions within social democracy are the key to the whole rightward shift of the political spectrum...'

('The Great Moving Right Show'<sup>1</sup>  
Stuart Hall)

I find myself in a curious position in the midst of the debates taking place within the Left over the past few years about the rise and fall of Labour and Labourism. Despite the nightmare of the current political and economic depression, I remain an optimist. Not because I think, in the best traditions of the well-intentioned fallen upon hard times, that something will turn up. Because I don't. But because the nature of this nightmare vindicates a critique of the crisis of socialism which is shared among thousands of 'doers' and 'thinkers' alike, people who have not deserted the Left, but whose despair and discontents with some of the movement's bad practices have generated the alternative ways of life for the Left. And so, my optimism finds its allies among pessimists, or rather the so-called pessimists.

While the so-called optimists still seem to be denying the internal fissures in the movement, saying: Crisis, Wot Crisis? it is now no longer possible to delineate a single socialism, a single Left. There are many. And the fact that there are many is testament to more than simply a healthy diversity — it is evidence that the bland barrackrooms of some of the Left's institutions, are besieged by strongholds of democratic socialism, whose imperative is to invent effective socialist renewal in the face of the exhausted examples of Labourism which have broken the spirit of socialism in Britain and by their bad practice have squandered support for the very idea.

#### LABOUR AND POWERLESSNESS

My argument in this article is that the postwar history of social democracy has alienated the mass of the people from socialism; it is that our renewal is not only a question of programmes and policies — though these are clearly important — but is more importantly about the relationship between the people and the structures, and party Labourism has created, which have alienated the people and left them with the pain of their own powerlessness.

It is clear that because the Labour Party is beginning to claw back some of its lost millions, there are suggestions that the crisis of the Left, undeniable after

Labour's crisis isn't primarily about policies and programmes, it's about relationships with the people. Look at its relationship with women, for example. . .

Beatrix Campbell

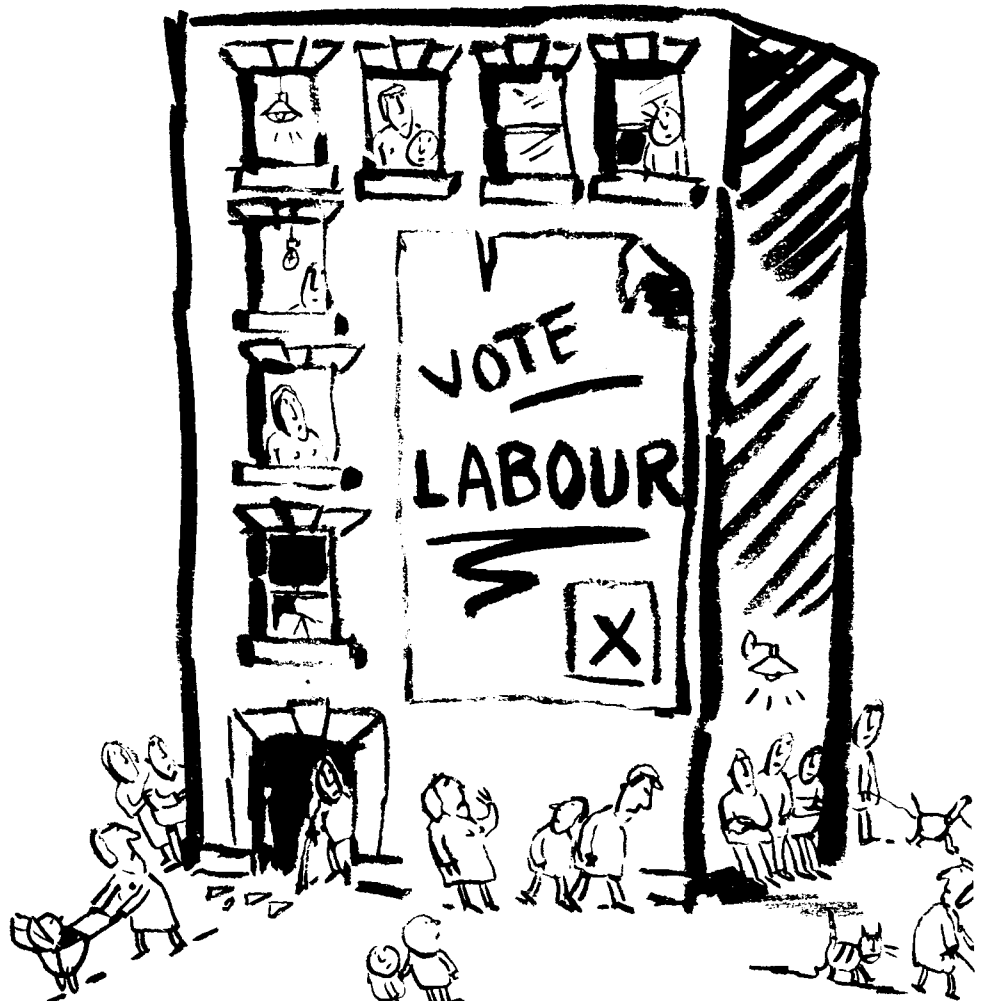
# How the Other Half Lives

two horrible defeats in general elections, is over and that, in Eric Heffer's words in *Marxism Today* (Dec), our job is to consolidate. I think we should look at Labour's fortunes from a different standpoint — not so much from the perspective of the performance of Labour's leaders, or the unification of the party after a period of bitter strife, but from the perspective of this question: how is Labour to repair the damage done over the whole of the post-war period?

If anything explains the flight to Thatcherism in a single word it is pessimism — a profound disbelief that democracy works. Housing is a useful case of the crisis of the social democratic ideal precisely because it is a sphere that democratic socialism can influence.

#### Homes fit for heroes?

Postwar consensus among all the main political parties assumed that to pull in the punters you had to promise a solution



to the housing shortage. Housing isn't just a commodity — though it is that — it is also where you live. It may be the only bit of the environment you feel you can influence.

The influence may be limited — but it is felt. It's easy to discern the desire — the owner-occupied houses on council estates disrupt the blank, barren line of the barracks provided for the people, with their mock georgian doors and olde English windows. At least the lucky tenants — the ones with gardens — enjoy a modicum of self-determination mingled with self-sufficiency. Vegetables and the colour of your living room walls was all that most of us who lived in council houses were allowed to determine.

The worst of it was the permanent condensation sweating on those cold concrete walls, the £200 quarterly heating bills in never-warm maisonettes, bringing up a three-year-old on the fifteenth floor, the repairs engendered by housing forms that were quick to build and quick to fall apart. Worst of all was the tenants being blamed for it all. Here I have to declare an interest: I've lived in council housing for most of my life, and I've talked to hundreds of tenants over the past couple of years in the course of writing *Wigan Pier Revisited*. They want better. They also want an apology.

The Labour Party's historic relationship to tenants has been a model of its patrician relationship to its own social base. Tenants rarely get to the point where their organisation is allowed to get beyond complaint and becomes assimilated into the process of design and management. Some local authorities are wising up, largely those populated by women and men of the young, new left schooled in the community struggles of the 60s and 70s, who are viewed so suspiciously by the party's godfathers, keen to make clients of their constituents.

#### Direct democracy

De-centralisation is just beginning — why didn't it describe Labour's management of council housing and council tenants 40 years ago?

The Left has been slow to abandon a statist and managerial approach to housing and embrace the opportunities afforded unusually and easily in the housing case for direct democracy to function alongside representative democracy. Its lethargy is less to do with the bureaucratic problem of joint management between workers, administrators, councillors and tenants than with its fear of losing control. The

Labour Party's panic over *loss* of control is mirrored in tenants' pessimism caused by their *lack* of it. By excluding tenants from the decision-making processes — whether they be architectural, financial or political, Labour *created* mass alienation from the process of politics itself. It de-politicised the people. It reduced them to consumers. So what could have been the classic case of social democracy's success has become the classic case of its failure. It has allowed the Right to set the political agenda.

### ... my optimism finds its allies amongst pessimists, or rather the so-called pessimists

The Tories have expressed the political transition brilliantly in their own coinage, 'the property-owning democracy'. Disaffection with democracy as politics has metamorphosed in right-wing propaganda into democracy as consumption and ownership. The Tories thereby appear to support freedom of choice, something Labour has never offered to its council tenants. It is a measure of the poverty of control most people feel they have over their physical environment that the simple fact of home-ownership should appear as self-determination. But the Tories' slogan speaks directly and effectively to that poverty of power which is most people's experience. Instead of empowering it's own people, the poorest people in Britain, the Labour Party in local government has taken power away, it has rendered them powerless, it has detonated democracy. And before anybody says that Labour's process of renewal is complete, how are they going to make that deep, political pain better.

#### SEX AND THE LABOUR PARTY

The story of housing is about Labour's relationship to the people outside the party. Now let's turn to a relationship inside the party, which is also about power and powerlessness.

The feminist Labour MP Harriet Harman said at the 'Labour's Lost Millions' debate in London earlier this year that the Labour Party was a single sex party. We know what she means — women certainly know what she means. She's talking about a party created in the image and interests of one sex.

But it isn't only a men's party. Women have always tried to organise in it and for it. So we are talking not simply about a party that excludes women, but one that

has subordinated women. Women have always had their own organisation within the party — it has about 1,000 women's sections. But room for manoeuvre has been conditional — they have been required to service the lifestyle of the party, and once the rank and file women's sections embrace feminism which challenges the social relationship between men and women, they put the men's permission in jeopardy. Not for the first time, the use of the trade union bloc vote is seen to be a problematic force in the party. But rarely can it have been so clearly seen as a men's vote against women, than when in the 80s the bloc vote was rolled out like a B-52 to blast the demands put to the party conference by the women's conference.

What they feared was a constituency they couldn't control. Neil Kinnock has admitted as much: 'What men and women in the labour movement will distrust is any effort to use the women's movement to tactical advantage.' Did that refer to women's role in the inner party power struggles between Right and Left? 'That's putting it very crudely, but OK, it'll do.' (In an interview with me in *City Limits*, September 1983 No 104).

So the women's rights were suppressed both because they represented a radical force in the party that couldn't be controlled, and as a women's vote that couldn't be controlled by men.

#### Women in the world at large

But what about the world outside? Labour can claim, though usually with less than boisterous enthusiasm, that it is the only party that has legislated for women (equal pay, sex discrimination and domestic violence — although abortion came from the Liberals, and in the struggle to save the 1967 Abortion Act in the 70s, some Labour MPs were caught with their virility hanging out.)

Nevertheless, it is not a party that has appealed to women at large *as women*. And before some of our male comrades splutter that this is a slanderous lie, let them be a fly on the wall at Labour Party women's meetings. And let us not forget instances like discussions over the party's latest manifesto, and the proposition that the married men's tax allowance — a patriarchal perk if ever there was one — be abolished and transferred to an increased child benefit paid to mothers. It was greeted with horror by some prominent left-wing protagonists. 'The lads on

<sup>1</sup> Ed Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques *The Politics of Thatcherism*.

the shopfloor won't like it,' they said.

Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in his article 'Labour's Lost Millions' in *Marxism Today* (Oct), that 70% of women don't vote Labour. Why didn't they? Part of the answer is: because Labour never really asked them to. And if that's unkind, coming from a communist, let's go to the horse's mouth. The May 1983 edition of the Labour Party Campaign group newsletter says: 'Labour has always regarded itself as the party of the underdog. But if the image of Labour as the champion of the working class has declined, that of it as a champion of women and ethnic minorities has never existed.'

### Voting patterns

What did women do in recent elections? Labour's support among women declined from 38% in 1974 to 35% in 1979 and a staggeringly bad 26% in 1983. The Tories gained from 39% in 1974 to a massive 47% in 1979 and held the line with 46% in 1983.

These figures can't be explained away as the innate conservatism of women. They should be looked at in the light of interesting statistics on peace. There is no evidence that women are *naturally* more peace-loving than men. A Mori poll conducted just before the last election showed that a majority of 52% were anti-Cruise, and more of that 52% were men (58%) than women (47%).

By 11-12 December 1983, Greenham's fence-shaking weekend and the screening of the American post-holocaust film 'The Day After', there was a five-point majority among men against Cruise, and a spectacular two-to-one majority against Cruise among women. Women were lost by Labour but gained for peace — the one and only piece of politics organised for and by women. And it worked.

When Gwynneth Dunwoody slandered Labour Party feminists at the 1982 conference as just a bunch of middle class women, no doubt echoed by not a few men, she also shut her face to the Greenham Common effect. It wasn't class she objected to, it was politics. We haven't heard the same complaint against Attlee, Gaitskill, Wilson or Foot. The attack presumably aims to conscript *working class* women against feminism. This kind of disdain of feminism isolates the very women in the party who are seeking to make amends for Labour's neglect of working class women's sex and class. Naturally, feminism challenges consensus about what constitutes 'normal relations' between men and women within the

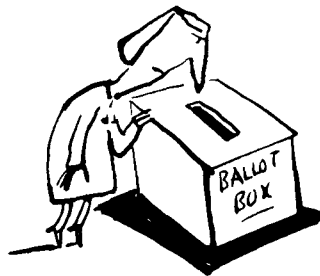
working class, and it draws on the discontented commonsense shared among women about the balance of power between men and women — that's what gives the women's movement some of its strength. Labour's failure to give it a public, political profile is part of its weakness.

### Taken for granted

Instead the Labour Party has been schizophrenic about women and their culture, harbouring a conservative politics of everyday life which sits uneasily with a sporadic rhetoric about equality.

The Right, on the other hand, consciously mobilises a conservative ideology of everyday life — it celebrates domesticity without ever questioning the conditions in which domestic work is performed. The women of the Labour Party don't necessarily want the domestic banished from the political agenda, they want its conditions transformed. For feminism, as for many 'ordinary' women, the domestic sphere is about work *and* much more, it is the site of the production and reproduction of human relationships, inside and outside families. Women want the work *valued, redistributed and resourced*, both privately and publicly.

The Right is simplistically positive about women's caring role in domestic life, and carelessly cavalier about its conditions. The Tory Party is treading softly, softly about domestic relationships. Its last manifesto declined to prescribe a model family — in the knowledge that the model nuclear family of husband, dependent wife and 2.4 children is now a



rarity, and in the knowledge that personal life is unstable and changing radically in our culture, largely as an expression of women's changing aspirations. Tory social policy may seek to reorganise the model family as the norm, but at the ideological level the Tories are stuck — they may invoke the family, its economy and ideology, but they now know that whether they like it or not, they can no longer appeal to a conservative family construct. But neither can they embrace the creative fissures and contradictions in private life

on the side of women. What they have done is to abstain from private life: cabinet ministers' affairs with their secretaries are their *private* affairs, comfortably consistent with Victorian values after all; on the other hand they *publicly* mobilise, in Stuart Hall's phrase, 'authoritarian populism'.

### Dangerous places

In Tory ideology private space is safe, public space is dangerous; the home becomes people's last line of defence, the streets are represented as the haunts of the reckless, the restless and the riotous. Tory ideology puts pickets and pickpockets into the same category, and both into the same category as child molesters and rapists. Street life becomes conflated in a Tory almanac of street crime. And that resonates in the minds of many women with a widely-shared fear of public space. The repressive Right has plenty to say about women's fears. The liberal Left doesn't.

But, while seeming to address women's fears, the Right is only mobilising panics about marauding masculinity for its promotion of private security as the best insurance against public disorder. In other words, the Tories trade on people's vulnerabilities as victims, and in the case of women they trade on women's sense that they're the victims of men. That allows the Tories to *appear* to represent both women's *fear*, and women's sense of *exclusion* from the world of men, whether it be a picketline or a football pitch. Tory ideology appears to address women *as women*. They've moved in where Labour fears to tread.

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**The Labour Party's panic  
over loss of control is mirrored  
in tenants' pessimism caused  
by their lack of it**

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I am not suggesting that by becoming a feminist party the Labour Party would recapture the millions of women who it has not only lost, but never had (though maybe I should). But I am suggesting that unless it takes responsibility for building a radical and feminist consensus among women, then the best that can happen is that women will remain its lost cause. And worse, Labour will remain women's lost cause. To change that, and I believe it must, the Labour Party needs to modify its view of political consciousness, how it is formed and how it moves. And it needs

to overhaul its view of political alliances, how they are made and how they are lost. Neil Kinnock might lose support among men if he went on television and argued that it's time men (including himself) did the housework, and shared the care of their own kids, but imagine how it would make the average women feel.

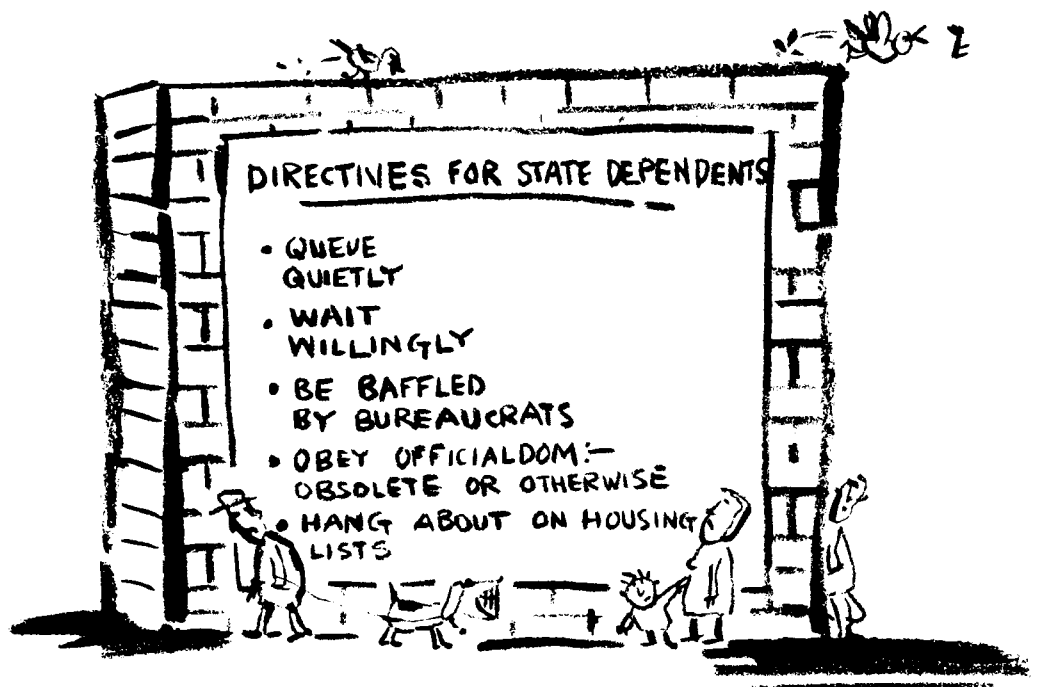
### Are they daft?

And while we are at it, what's happened to men's allegiance to the Labour Party? Thatcherism has hijacked many men from some of the heartlands of masculine Labourism. To some on the Left, there is apparently nothing to explain. There is no such thing as Thatcherism Tony Benn told me in an interview in *City Limits* (Jan 84, No 120): it is 'a complete mistake. What's wrong with Britain today is capitalism and oppression.'

How, then, are we to explain the terrible collapse of Labour's support among working class men? Part of the explanation lies in the way social democracy created despair about democracy, but isn't there more to say? Between 1974 and 1983 Labour's support among men slipped from 43% to 30%. And for the Tories it rose from 32% to 42%. Why? It can't simply be that they're daft, duped. I believe that part of the explanation lies in the Tories' appeal to working class men as *men*. The sectional self-interest which had fuelled so much traditional wage-bargaining has now worked against Labour since the late 70s and for the Tories. The Tories, after all, talk that language. During the 70s, the popular press made much of attempts within our movement to change the balance of power between blacks and whites and men and women. Thatcherism crossed the boundaries of working men's class allegiance to Labour and appeared as the authentic voice of men's 'sexual Toryism.'

The Campaign Group within the Labour Party suggests that 'Labour's electoral prospects will inevitably suffer unless the Party regains the confidence of its traditional supporters and gains the support of other disadvantaged groups.' How? And can it do both at the same time? Can it appeal to the racism and sexism of one group without forfeiting the right to represent the rights of millions of poor black people and women? No. It can only gain the confidence of the latter if it takes the responsibility for the reform of the former. It can't buy its way into the heart of the old labour aristocracy. But neither can it desert them.

What is clearly happening in our soc-



iety is that relations between conflicting interests within the working class are unstable and volatile — our culture is heaving and steaming, it's all on the move, but which way? Backwards or forwards? Labour cannot remake its social base by simply administering an old sexual consensus that is already exploding.

### A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN HER UNION

Any meaningful discussion of people's experience of Labourism can't omit the trade union movement. Here, above all, mass values are created in the daily practice of our collision with the class enemy. The Labour Party may not be a mass party (it is the only mass working class party we've got, but participation in its affairs remains a minority sport) but the labour movement is a mass practice. It holds contradictory values simultaneously: it is an egalitarian movement and at the same time it is not. The key to that conundrum is its relationship to women.

'A women's place is in her union,' says the slogan. Until recently, that wasn't true — the movement wasn't a place that welcomed women. Now it is true, but the effort to be in her place speaks of the transition the labour movement is going through, and speaks volumes about who's movement it is. The labour movement isn't a women's movement. It isn't a movement represented by women. Let's hope that one day it will be, but meanwhile our task is to cope with the legacy:

the movement's personnel and its political priorities express the results of the historic struggle between men and women.

### Reality not rhetoric

Our questions need address not the rhetoric of the labour movement, but the reality from the point of view of the people, particularly the poorest people in the working class: does the daily activity of bargaining adequately shift the balance of class power, and intra-class power? None of these questions can be asked without fully appraising ourselves of what exactly the class enemy is up to. But the analysis of the enemy won't substitute for analysis of what collective bargaining does and does not deliver.

For the last 15 or 20 years, leading figures in the trade union movement have pressed for a reform of collective bargaining. And again Len Murray has launched a discussion within the TUC about renewal. In his paper he warns that divisions within the working class are as intense as divisions across classes. The movement must show that it is truly representative, says Murray. The implication is, of course, that it is not. But Murray is putting forward a wrong solution to this real problem. As always, the Right's inclination is to solve the movement's crises of representation by sitting on struggle rather than setting it alight. So, the Right's modernisation of the movement is managerial rather than radical. The Left often seems to abstain from these debates about the reform of bargaining yet that leaves the

initiative with the Right. Why hasn't the Left initiated debate around the perceived need to democratise wages struggles. The Left can't sit in its corner conserving its own fortifications, it has to take responsibility for modernisation, too. If the Right has a minimalist approach to the problem of hegemony, then the Left must always answer it by *maximising* participation. In other words it must take responsibility for forms of struggle which both *empower* the maximum number of people and map out strategic, rather than simply tactical, working class offensives which *take* power from the enemy. I believe that the failure to find a new, egalitarian and democratic settlement within the working class itself, undermines our capacity to take that on. Since World War II redistribution of resources between class, and between workers, low paid and well paid, men and women, has been on the political agenda — from time to time. Among feminists in the labour movement it is our agenda.

#### Challenging conventional wisdom

One of the important changes in trade unionism in the 70s was the presence of a new force: the low paid and women — the caterers, carers and clerks who are so easily scorned by some people in the labour movement. Their presence was strongly felt in collective bargaining strategies which implicitly, if not explicitly, challenged the conventional wisdom that the bargaining successes of the higher-paid would be passed on to the lower-paid. The challenge was concretely manifest in the limp Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, together with two other important features: the assault on low pay in the public sector, particularly by NUPE, and the brief introduction of a state-initiated flat rate, the £6 flat rate of the social contract.

But if the mid-70s was a period of priority attached to the low-paid, the restoration of collective bargaining was associated, and remains so, with the restoration of differentials. This is *not* an argument against collective bargaining — collective bargaining is simply the necessary context in which British workers slug it out with the employers. It is only our *form* of bargaining. The issue at stake is the content. What has the content of collective bargaining come up with over the past decade for women?

Women's hourly earnings, compared to men's reached their peak during the period in which the flat rate policy of the social contract and the last stages of implementation of the Equal Pay Act were active.

|           |       |           |       |
|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1976..... | 75.1% | 1980..... | 73.5% |
| 1977..... | 75.5% | 1981..... | 74.8% |
| 1978..... | 73.9% | 1982..... | 73.9% |
| 1979..... | 73%   | 1983..... | 74.1% |

#### Rise of militancy

So we see the defeat of the fragile egalitarianism of the late 60s and 70s, when low pay and women's pay moved forcefully on to the political agenda.

A feminist principle in trade unionism must be for the restoration of the principle of democracy and equality to wages offensives. Feminist trade unionism has been partly guided by the rise of militancy among low-paid workers, particularly women in the public sector represented by NUPE, and their attack on relative low pay. Many shop stewards still recall their complex feelings about the £6 flat rate introduced by the then new Labour government. It was the first *real* rise low-paid women had ever enjoyed. During the 70s NUPE did achieve a minimum for its members equivalent to two-thirds of the average male wage, *pro rata* for part-timers (women). But that success among ancillary staff has been dissipated — they would now have to be earning a basic £100 a week. In fact their basic is £65. At the end of the decade, the low paid suffered a mighty counter-attack by the employers which found an echo in elements of the trade union movement itself: the employers' pay package met the premium put on restoration of differentials — the poorest trade unionists paid the price. Equality, it seemed, was a sometime thing.

Today, when low pay is once again an acute issue, even if it is not yet on the political agenda, according to the Labour Research Department 25% of pay claims nationally include a flat rate element. Will it be followed next year by the restoration of differentials? Flat rate is a feminist approach to pay bargaining. However, the £6 flat rate was part of a completely disastrous package designed to sell the industrial quiescence that the Labour government wanted.

Amongst public sector non-manual workers, women's earnings in relation to men's are now worse than they were in 1970. The peak was in 1977. We might have expected the differential between men and women to stabilise after 1977, the best year. In fact, the bargaining strategies deployed involved not only a retreat from the egalitarian wage offensives of the mid-70s, but an organised reversal. With a vengeance.

#### By their deeds. . .

It is these contradictions which makes the Left an odd place for women. Naturally drawn to it as a movement of change and a movement for equality, women find themselves encircled by practices and priorities which speak the opposite. For the labour movement today is not an area in which everyday life between men and women is markedly different from anywhere else. How, then, do we test the 'ideology' of the labour movement? In its manifestos and resolutions, or in its daily deeds? For men, their bad faith, their domestic indolence, their megalomania in relation to women is shrouded in their philosophical good intentions. And we all know where they lead. This makes the Left a puzzle and a problem for women. For its stated commitments incite an alliance between men and women for the liberation of women, as women. Its lived life incites disaffection not to say despair. It also demands change.

#### ALLIANCES DON'T FALL FROM THE SKY

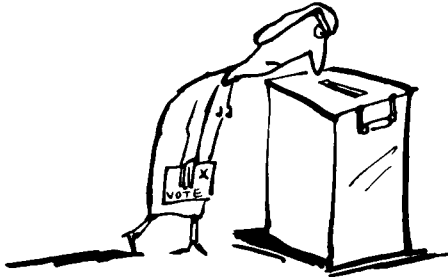
These figures describe the conditions in which women participate in the labour movement. Its an alliance which is still organised at their expense — although clearly trade unionism is the necessary condition for women's collective self-determination in the economy. What is now at stake is the reconstruction of men and women's alliance with each other, and with it the reform of the labour movement.

Alliances aren't arithmetic aggregates of disparate interests. Alliances are only conversations. They are the political space in which different political and social forces encounter each other, enter into dialogue and are transformed by each other. What is at stake for the Left and the labour movement now is whether the necessary conversation between the people and the people's parties is one that the parties are prepared to have. And it is whether the forces contending for power within the movement can come to a different historic settlement.

Preoccupied with Eric Hobsbawm's fleeting reference to a possible electoral arrangement, many of those involved in the 'Labour's Lost Millions' debate unfortunately reduced the issue of alliances to a wrangle over the possibility of an electoral alliance with the Alliance.

Eric Heffer, in *Marxism Today* (Dec) boldly banished such a notion to the swamp of reformism. He argued that the Labour Party must beware of alliances with hungry deadbeats, isolated and itchy for a

piece of the action. He proposed instead that individual party membership should be increased and workplace organisation encouraged, especially in industry. This is party chauvinism. But if Heffer has got it wrong, and I think he has, then so have others on the Left in the Labour Party. The interview with Tony Benn referred to earlier, revealed the same lacuna. He *assumed* an alliance between men and women in the movement. Ken Livingstone is among the most sensitive Labour politicians around, and has certainly done most to get hold of feminism and sexual politics. Talking about his parliamentary



prospects he said (again in *City Limits* Jul 83, No91) 'it would be a mistake to stand in a safe seat with a solid, white skilled working class who can't stand blacks or poofs, who'd probably think I was a new degenerate.'

CL: 'So you're talking about a kind of politics which is about everybody who isn't the white, skilled working class.'

KL 'The dispossessed. We got that vote in the election — that's why there were the swings to Labour in Brent, Westminster, Hampstead and Hornsey, areas where you've got a cosmopolitan approach to life. We've got that, so somehow we've got to reclaim the skilled working class by concentrating on economic policies and convincing them they'll work.'

### Doing sums

All these representatives of the Labour Left in one way or another know that the crisis for Labour lies in part with the collapse of its internal and external alliances. Nevertheless, even they are divided. What we are now witnessing, is a contest within the Left in the Labour Party, between those hoping to secure a new alliance with 'the dispossessed' and the mollification of the traditional white, skilled base, and those seeking to retain that old base as its core, while adding to the alliance the agenda of 'the dispossessed'. But what is characteristic of all the Labour Party positions is an instrumental view of alliances, which seeks statistically to aggregate random or conflicting interests. Part of their problem is that in the Labour

Party there is a kind of party chauvinism which sees alliances in terms of affiliations or arithmetic.

It all wouldn't matter so much if the Labour Party had actually delivered the goods. But has it? It's just lost two general elections, when the British economy is in its worst crisis since the last one. Labour depended the peace movement to do the *work* that put war and peace on the political agenda. It was Labour's task only to express that political work electorally. Instead it was squandered. Instead of Labour appearing as *the peace party*, peace appeared as the site of inner-party struggle.

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## Labour cannot remake its social base by simply administering an old sexual consensus that is already exploding

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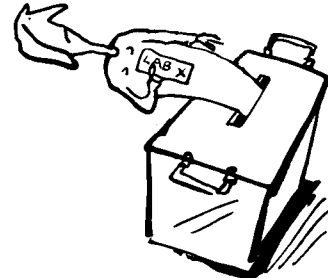
In fact it confused two issues: its own inner party struggle, and the nuances of policy fought over between Right and Left in the party; and a viable electoral strategy, one that described just how much and how little the party could do within five years if it were elected to government. This typifies the Labour Party's tendency to conflate two distinct entities, in this case the party, the peace movement and the people. To secure unilateralism as the strategic position of the party is one thing — to plan precisely and tactically how to make that operational in a five year stretch of government is quite another. All of us on the Left have to learn that hard, horrible lesson. That was Labour's task as a possible party of government. It failed, therefore, to do justice to itself or to the peace movement which had successfully and subtly shifted the centre of political gravity in Britain about nuclear weapons.

Finally, let it be said, participation by the Labour Party in the peace movement would be good for both of them, but it wouldn't necessarily increase the individual or affiliated membership of the party. By Heffer's criteria does that make it a movement the Labour Party can disengage itself from? Of course not. But Heffer *et al* have to learn that the Labour Party cannot any longer participate in political action as if it were only 'for the party'.

### Agents and subjects

Alliances are not about reducing movements like women and peace to satellites of the party — the party perhaps cannot be

the centre of such an alliance. The party, then, is going to have to learn that it has something to learn from these movements, that it will be changed by them. In other words, the party — and this applies to all the parties of the Left — have to see themselves as not only agents of change but as subjects of change. But Eric Heffer's position sees the Labour Party only as an agent of change. Heffer makes this clear when he argues that 'to a large extent the renewal process has been completed, and now the time has come to consolidate the changes, to translate them into campaigns throughout the country and win support



for the party.' Well, what can you say? All I can say is: tell that to the women and the black comrades in your party.

Typically, the Labour leadership opposed the TUC's support for the 1982 People's March for exactly these reasons — it might have interfered with the party's electoral campaign. It couldn't imagine that mass mobilisation around unemployment would have benefited both the Left in general and the unemployed in particular, irrespective of immediate electoral gains for the Labour Party itself. More seriously, it couldn't imagine involving itself in anything concerned with simply changing consciousness. And here we have another clue to the failure of renewal in the Labour Party. It's own-party chauvinism seems to make it think that changes in the Labour Party are changes in the culture, are changes in the people. But the party is *lagging behind* changes in the culture and in the people — it doesn't meet their need of organisation, it can hardly keep its own organisation together, and it doesn't express the dynamic fissures and contradictions in popular consciousness and culture. Primarily, it doesn't see itself changing the political universe we all inhabit by *creating* politics — except as a kind of narcissistic reflection of itself. In other words — it doesn't take responsibility for change. And it doesn't see itself as a problem in the contemporary constellation of politics and culture.

Perhaps the truth is that the process of renewal, far from being complete, is barely begun. □

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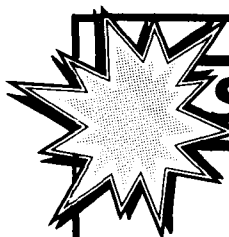
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Like the rest of the Left, the Communist Party has been seriously in decline. At root it is an identity crisis. Can it be resolved?

Jon Bloomfield

# Crossed Lines:

## Communists in Search of an Identity

THE LAST NINE MONTHS has seen a lively, sharp and often passionate debate within the British Left and Labour movement. The debate has focused on the state of British politics after the re-election of the Conservative government and how the Left should respond to this situation. The dramatic slump in Labour's electoral fortunes indicated by the June 9 result has given an urgency and edge to these discussions.

The welcome recovery of electoral support for Labour shown by the opinion polls and the holding by Tony Benn of the Chesterfield seat in the face of concerted media attention does not lessen the necessity of this debate. For, in fact, June 9 expressed in stark form, the underlying longer term crisis of the Left and many of its ideas. This crisis, cautiously spotlighted in the discussions of the late 1970s around Eric Hobsbawm's article 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?'<sup>1</sup>, has accelerated with the recession and the political onslaught of Thatcherism. The question mark of the initial article has become redundant. Thus while the present truce to Labour's internal struggles and the election of a charismatic leader are important, to overcome the broader crisis will require a more drastic, thorough-going process of renewal.

### Trends within the Left and labour movement

The centre of gravity of the Labour Party has shifted over the past five years, accelerated by the breakaway of the hard Right to form the SDP. The deep economic crisis with mass unemployment and rapid de-industrialisation; the disillusion with the Wilson/Callaghan governments and the successful campaign for internal constitutional reforms, each contributed to a leftward shift in policy and leadership. By the early 1980s there were considerable differences amongst the Left as to how to proceed, while there were distinct signs of unease among sections of the trade union movement. The awful general election result has brought matters to a head. While the situation remains fluid three general political trends commonly characterised as the Centre-Right, the hard Left and the broad Left, are discernible. None of these trends are monolithic and rigid, with many positions, of both organisations and individuals, still evolving. What follows is intended to serve only as a general guideline.

### The Centre-Right

They have responded to the election defeat by heading for the centre ground in the Labour Party. Hattersley and his supporters called for major changes in policy and approach during the leadership election campaign, but all those associated with him have been careful to call for unity and loyalty to the new leadership. The post-election shift to the right, which some feared, has not yet occurred. Partly this is because after the SDP defection, Labour's hard Right is now much weaker, while politicians such as Hattersley and Healey have shifted own their

stance, partly, but not only or even mainly, as a reaction to the SDP.

It is noticeable that the Centre-Right trend has been stronger in the trade union movement. Here it is important to note that a strong hard Right trend also exists, notably around the EEU and AUEW. The economic crisis and longer term shifts in the composition of the workforce has a more immediate and material impact on trade unions than the Labour Party. Sharp falls in union membership and weakening of organisation have occurred, while the non-manual unions, largely not affiliated to the Labour Party,

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### the Centre-Right trend has been stronger in the trade union movement

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have gained in influence within the TUC. These factors, combined with the desertion of trade unionists from Labour's electoral ranks, were central to the TUC's shift to the right at its September 1983 Congress. The real danger of the TUC's much vaunted 'new realism' is that it represents an accommodation to new realities without any conception of struggle to change them. If this approach became dominant within the labour movement, it would enormously increase the likelihood of a significant retreat by the Labour Party.

### The hard Left

This is the popular name for what can more accurately be described as a fundamentalist left trend. Amongst the elements embraced by this category are the several Trotskyist groups who have recently entered the Labour Party following the tactic long pursued by the Militant Group; those associated with the *Briefing* journal; and a section of Labour Party activists who identify with the editorial views of *Tribune*. It was this trend which supported Eric Heffer in the leadership election against Neil Kinnock. They exert greater sway and influence over the Left than Heffer's low vote would suggest.

The primary characteristic — and appeal — of the fundamentalists is their certainty and simplicity. The questions and queries which beset other socialists appear not to bother them. The changing character of working class; the Left's present range of policies; the nature of socialism; the position and role of women; all these and more beside present no problems. Provided correct leadership is offered, the people will respond.

Thus the fundamentalist Left has minimised the significance of the election defeat and Labour's longer term decline. It is generally resistant to any policy rethinking. Instead it concedes that improvements must be made in presentation (Eric Heffer *Marxism Today* Dec 1983). The primary cause of election defeat was

<sup>1</sup> *Marxism Today*, Sept, 1978.

sabotage by the 'Guilty Men' of the Right (*Tribune* 10 June 1983). Since the 1981 deputy leadership election, Tony Benn, in contrast to previously, appears to have drifted towards this trend and since the general election his views have in some respects coincided with it. Thus shortly after the election he wrote that Labour's vote of 8½ million was 'a remarkable development by any standards and deserves some analysis'. What was remarkable in Benn's eyes was that Labour had 'won such a large vote' when 'for the first time since 1945' it had been arguing 'an openly socialist policy'.<sup>2</sup>

### The broad Left

Wide sections of the Left, however, refused to see defeat turned into victory in this manner. Drawn from diverse parts of the labour, socialist and democratic movements, with varied concerns and emphases, this group now form a discernible broad Left response to the present political situation. Several common features are evident from this quarter. Firstly, and most importantly, there is a clear recognition of the gravity of the defeat suffered on 9 June. Secondly, there is agreement on the great danger presented by a second term of Thatcherite rule and that the movement's energy and attention must be channelled against this main threat. This requires unity within the labour movement and increased campaigning among the people to arouse popular opposition to government policies. Thirdly, successful campaigning will require the Left to address new issues of the 1980s and to promote a clearer, more relevant vision of a future socialist and democratic Britain.

There are a range of diverse indications of this trend. Kinnoch and Robin Cook echoed some of these themes in the leadership campaign. Ron Todd is doing likewise in the TGWU election for general secretary. Ken Livingstone and the Labour GLC have adopted this broad approach in their imaginative battle to defend local democracy.

For the moment this trend appears to enjoy the backing of a majority swathe of Labour Party opinion. Yet, apart from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, it lacks precise substance and on organising focus outside the Kinnoch leadership. It is more of a mood, a response to the shock scale of electoral defeat and is neither stable nor cohesive. Its inability to command the same degree of support within the trade unions as it has in the Labour Party, along with dangers of electoral opportunism, make sections of this trend susceptible to a revived, social democratic modernism

CP Chairperson and Scots miners leader George Bolton with CP General Secretary Gordon McLennan on platform, National Congress. 1983



reminiscent of the early Wilson years. It remains to be seen whether the broad Left will resist this danger and instead attempt a renewal and modernisation of Labour's fortunes by articulating a coherent short and medium term strategy for shifting the balance of wealth and power to working people. One of the factors determining the outcome will be the influence and impact of the Communist Party.

One of the remarkable features of these debates has been the influence of the CP Articles by Communist writers such as Bob Rowthorn, Dave Priscott and, above all, Eric Hobsbawm have been crucial reference points to the debate. Over the past few years the party's theoretical journal, *Marxism Today*, has sponsored and encouraged crucial strategic discussions on Thatcherism, the labour movement's crisis and how to overcome them. In consequence a significant section of Labour and socialist activists have listened and related to Communist analysis. Kinnoch's warm welcome for Hobsbawm's 'Labour's Lost Millions' article when he chaired a Fabian Society meeting addressed by Hobsbawm on the eve of the 1983 Labour Party Conference can be viewed as a recognition of the contribution to labour movement strategic thinking that *Marxism Today* and communists like Hobsbawm are making. It is a point that has been recognised by critics as well as friends (*Socialist Action* 17 February 1984).

## The primary characteristic — and appeal — of the fundamentalists is their certainty and simplicity

### No chance occurrence

This is no chance occurrence. The Communist Party's capacity to do this is indicative of the power of an open, creative Marxism, when freed from a dogmatic straitjacket, to analyse specific situations and suggest responses to them. It is also a mistake to think this development is somehow just confined to 'intellectuals', who at times in these debates have been subjected to the type of prejudice which the socialist movement is meant to challenge and eradicate. The CP's 38th Congress last November made a significant contribution to this process. The main resolution spelled out the following perspective. 'The starting point must be the definition of the main enemy and identification of the combination of forces necessary to defeat it. That main enemy is the Tory government. . . Developing mass, class and democratic struggles, uniting the labour movement and seeking out allies in a broad anti-Tory fight is the way forward for the labour movement rather than taking a narrow, go-it-alone sectarian approach to its activity'. The resolution argued 'A more outward-looking Left, which makes involvement in mass struggle and mass, political ideological work its top priority is needed to prevent its isolation'. This approach is crucial to the task of defeating the Tories and laying the conditions for the election of Labour government. The extent to which that would be a Left government 'of a new type' will depend upon the success and popular impact of the Left over the next few years.

This view contrasts sharply with those on the Left who see the answer to Thatcherism as instant socialism. Within the Labour Party Eric Heffer has long been a prominent advocate of this position. His recent contribution to the debate on 'Labour's Lost Millions' in *Marxism Today* (Dec 83) was full of references to 'Labour's immediate socialist objectives' and 'socialist policies'. Since the election Tony Benn has openly adopted this perspective, calling for campaigning on an explicitly anti-capitalist basis: 'The real answer will be found next time round . . . in organising a real

socialist campaign' (*Socialist Action* 13 Jan 1984). These sentiments may strike a chord among committed activists but they do not correspond to any sober assessment of the present political balance of forces. A sense of different phases within the process of transition to socialism is completely absent.

### The Communist Party

Historically the CP has been an influential if small component of the British Left. It has been a consistent source of socialist ideas and Marxist education for successive generations of militants and activists. It has sustained the *Daily Worker* and *Morning Star* since 1930. The party has always argued for and organised extra-parliamentary struggle both in industry and the community. Furthermore, it has brought internationalist perspectives into British politics, most notably and successfully in the anti-fascist period.

The party retains these qualities today. *Marxism Today* has established a widespread reputation for serious socialist analysis, reflected in its steadily growing sales. The 1981 Peoples March for Jobs was largely conceived by the party, whose organisation and enthusiasm were central to its success. Despite its depletion, the party retains the most extensive network of industrial organisation on the Left. Its work for nuclear disarmament is recognised by friend and foe alike, while it took the lead in mobilising opposition to the Falklands war. Yet despite these real achievements the party is deeply divided and in crisis. Membership has fallen from 29,943 in 1973 to 15,691 in 1983. Domestic *Morning Star* sales have fallen from more than 30,000 to less than 15,000 in the same period, while at the last general election the average Communist vote reached a post-war low. The depth of division has been dramatically spotlighted over the issue of the political control of the *Morning Star*, where the party has been condemned as 'a body outside the PPPS'<sup>3</sup> interfering in the paper's affairs (*Morning Star* 3 June 1983). The run-up to the November Congress was exceedingly bitter and despite Congress support for Executive Committee positions, including on the *Morning Star*, opposition to Congress decisions continues. Inevitably this combination of decline and internal polarisation has partially debilitated the party and demoralised some members.

At root the CP is suffering from an unresolved dual crisis. Firstly it has been trying to come to terms with the enormous changes which have taken place in Britain since the end of the Second World War. In this respect, it faces a serious challenge similar to that confronting the Labour Party and trade union movement. Secondly, from its foundation, the CP has always been part of an international movement. Profound and, at times, seismic shocks have convulsed the international communist movement in the past four decades. The need to confront these questions had given the evolution of the CP a distinctive dynamic.

### The international movement

The response to both these issues, especially in a theoretically-based party, was bound to provoke sharp controversy. It has been the international issues which have generated the greatest heat and passion. In the wake of the revelations of Stalin's crimes at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, followed by the Hungarian events, a sizeable minority left the party. Probably more significant in the longer term, it undermined the party's unshakeable faith in the Soviet Union. The leadership responded by inserting a substantial section on socialist democracy and civil rights into the party's programme and emphasising the national independence and sovereignty of each Communist Party.

The spell of infallibility was broken. But a minority for whom



Delegates to CP 38th National Congress, 1983

Stalin's mistakes were merely 'spots on the sun' were uneasy. When the party displayed its independence in practice — opposing the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 — unease turned to opposition. As the party continued to grapple with these issues (eg, John Gollan's article on socialist democracy in *Marxism Today*, January 1976), so it became clear that for a sizeable minority any criticism of the Soviet Union was unwelcome and the principles of socialist democracy expressed by the party were considered 'revisionist'. On these questions two very different voices began to be heard in public. With the events in Afghanistan and Poland the breach has widened yet more.

### The British Road

The party's early response to the postwar situation was the adoption of a programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, which envisaged the establishment of socialism without civil war through the combination of mass extra-parliamentary activity and the election of a socialist, parliamentary majority. This contrasted sharply with the previous strategy for a Soviet Britain, yet the experience of the anti-fascist period in Britain and Europe confirmed the validity of the new approach in the view of most members. While two further editions in 1958 and 1968 updated it, the major modernisation of the programme occurred in 1977.

By the mid-1970s the country's social structure and character had altered considerably; new social forces had made their mark on politics; and regeneration of Marxist thought was challenging dogmatic and vulgarised features of Marxism. The new edition retained the basic outlook of the 1951 programme but importantly broke with some previous approaches. Firstly, the nature of capitalist rule and the exercise of ruling class hegemony, gained by consent as well as coercion, was much more carefully analysed. Here the ideas of the Italian communist Gramsci were influential. This break from economic reductionist explanations of politics, of 'the Tories do what the FBI tells them' variety, was soon to have vital political implications. When the Thatcher government consistently ignored CBI advice after 1979, it was this new theoretical framework that helped the Left come to terms with Thatcherism, its authoritarian populism and its appeal to sections of the working class in ways which those in the Left stuck in economistic modes of thought were unable to grasp.

Secondly, the programme recognised that as well as the capital/labour contradiction, there were other contradictions in society. The programme emphasised the oppression of women. Their increased entry into the workplace and the enhanced capacity to control their own fertility had in many ways served to highlight their continued second-class status. To overcome

<sup>2</sup> *Guardian*, 20 June, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> The People's Press Printing Society, the co-operative which owns the *Morning Star*.

oppression and achieve liberation required an autonomous movement taking up the whole spectrum of women's issues. The situation of women could neither be explained nor resolved simply in class terms. A similar analysis applied to other social forces — ethnic minorities, students, youth, senior citizens. The working class, which the programme saw as the lynchpin of the forces for change, intercepted and overlapped with these forces. They needed to be drawn into an alliance powerful enough to wrest power from the ruling class.

Previously, the party had characterised this as an anti-monopoly alliance, yet this had the severe drawback of pivoting the alliance solely on an economic basis. This narrowed the potential scope and appeal of the alliance, while it suggested a restrictive interpretation of working class struggle. The new edition replaced the idea with the concept of a broad democratic alliance. This encapsulated two advances. It posed the central political task as the democratisation of the economy, civil society and the state while its democratic theme was a more adequate conceptual basis on which to ally a wide range of forces around the working class. This democratic theme linked in to a third new feature of the programme: it conceived of the transition to socialism as a revolutionary process which would not occur all at once but would pass through different stages. This process would require majority backing in each phase. The pertinence of this point to present debates is clear, although the implications of this concept remain greatly under-explored.

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## They argue as if the working class will simply and readily respond to firm, socialist leadership

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### The opposition

After lengthy debate these changes were approved by large majorities at the 1977 Congress. Yet the application of new concepts proved difficult and met with resistance and opposition. Gradually two strands of opposition have crystallised. The group centred around the monthly journal *Straight Left* have their origins in disagreements with the party's international orientation. They call for unconditional support for the Soviet Communist Party and believe the party has followed a revisionist course since 1956, if not before. They deride 'bourgeois feminism' and other social movements; want to abandon the CP's electoral work in order to facilitate entering the Labour Party, and are a CP mirror-image of *Militant*. At the last Congress they had the support of one fifth of the delegates.

The second strand of oppositionists are a combination of some who originally opposed the 1977 *British Road* with conservative elements who nominally supported it. Gradually this combination has coalesced into a fundamentalist coalition with the *Morning Star* as its main base.

Their over-riding characteristic is a refusal to confront the changing realities of British and international politics. Three examples will illustrate this. Firstly, as with Labour's fundamentalists there is no recognition of the labour movement's crisis. They argue as if the working class will simply and readily respond to firm, socialist leadership. Thus a post-election *Morning Star* editorial declared that 'the problem facing the labour movement is not that the manifesto was too advanced. . . (rather) . . . it should be developing it further to the left' (19 July 1983). Those expressing concern at Labour's election defeat have been castigated for 'pessimistic navel gazing' (6 Oct 1983). Secondly the role of social forces and non-class issues is recognised but minimised. Their character is debased. Rejecting the analysis of

the 1977 *British Road* there is a return to simple economic formulations. It is argued that the 'broad democratic alliance' mobilises people 'in struggle against the capitalist monopolies' (Tony Chater, *Morning Star* 27 Feb 1984). Thirdly, this trend wants a moratorium on criticism of the socialist countries. Former industrial organiser Mick Costello clearly expressed this realignment in the pre-Congress discussion by demanding 'it is time we allied ourselves enthusiastically with all the forces for progress in the world, the socialist camp above all' (*Focus* No 9 Sept 1983).

At the November Congress this bloc commanded support from roughly one-sixth of the delegates. On all the key controversial issues — assessment of the general election; support for martial law in Poland; hostility to *Marxism Today*; opposition to the party view on the *Morning Star*; composition of the new executive — the two opposition trends joined forces. To give an indication of the voting pattern which this produced, on the *Morning Star* they were defeated by 155 votes to 92.

### The future

The 38th Congress represented an important victory for the party in defeating a twofold sectarian challenge. Clearly to overcome internal paralysis this has to be followed up by a swift restoration of the traditional relationship between the party and the *Morning Star*. Yet, of itself, this will not be sufficient to generate a brighter future. How can the party overcome its identity crisis? How can it build a new sense of purpose and direction based on the application of its most positive traditions and perceptive innovations?

The first hallmark is one which has already been mentioned at length — the formulation of a realisable strategic perspective for the Left.

This is crucial to the achievement of the party's second hallmark as an initiator and practitioner of struggle. Here, as with the question of alliances, the party's Marxist outlook distinguishes it from the electoral preoccupations of left as well as right Labourism. The *British Road* recognises the importance of elections and the legitimacy given to the Left by electoral victory, yet it never substitutes this for a wider class analysis. The programme is based upon the traditional Marxist maxim that 'the masses make history.' This feature remains a distinctive and enduring strength of the CP. Undoubtedly the internal aggravation of the last few years has weakened this role.

Its reassertion is dependent on a firm commitment at national, regional and local level to the generation of struggle on the entire gamut of issues thrown up by Thatcherism. In particular, the party's extensive roots in the labour movement can help revitalise the movement and safeguard its political links currently threatened by the Tebbit/King legislation.

The party's third distinctive feature is its commitment to alliances. Its programme recognises that social movements arise from specific contradictions in society not reducible simply to class. The party welcomes and seeks to strengthen the women's liberation, anti-racist, environmental and nationalist movements. At the same time it tries to encourage these movements to have a close, mutual relationship with the working class movement, which for theoretical and political reasons the party rightly considers the fulcrum of an alliance for progress. The breadth of these movements and their autonomy must be respected. As peoples, rather than class-based, movements it is inappropriate to seek to attach them organisationally to the Labour Party. In this sense they are clearly different from trade unions. Socialists can work in a principled way in these movements neither cloaking their broader

political beliefs nor seeking to impose them. The CP has done this consistently in the peace movement, as Bruce Kent's recent statement testified. 'I have never known occasions when the Communist Party has attempted to achieve sectarian advantage out of CND.'<sup>4</sup>

### Alliances

Fourthly the party should project itself more boldly as an indispensable think-tank of the Left. As a party based on a creative, open Marxism, it has a particular interest in generating and popularising socialist theory and strategy. This is particularly so as regards contemporary British society, where a creative Marxism must face up to the challenge of new movements and issues such as feminism, ecology and deindustrialisation. It is true to say that the party has a creditable record here. The development of its programme; the considerable — and painful — deliberations on socialist democracy; the contribution of *Marxism Today*; and the engagement with feminism represent four notable achievements. However, enormous scope for development exists. *Marxism Today* suggests that the party can be the fulcrum for key discussions on the Left. Furthermore, while socialism is not on the immediate political agenda, the need for discussion among socialists about the character and shape of a socialist Britain remains urgent, the Left cannot ignore the need to rekindle the vision of socialism and propagate its values in modern day terms.

These four hallmarks can give the CP a clear sense of identity and purpose. If presented imaginatively this approach would unify the bulk of party members for it offers an actual and potentially significant role within the British Left without lapsing into sectarian hostility to the Labour Party or retaining grandiose aspirations of replacing it. Certainly there are real limitations on

the party's capacity and shortcomings in its work not simply attributable to internal divisions. But the party can play an influential part in the reshaping and progress of the Left and the development of wider popular struggles.

The future of the CP is not just of concern to its members. The thrust of this article has been to suggest that it is very pertinent to the prospects for the left and democratic movements as a whole. Here it is important to reiterate the considerable rethinking required by the Left. The need for a genuinely transformative strategy rather than a technocratic modernism has already been cited. This applies equally to the Left's relations to the newer social movements. These cannot be seriously embraced without an alteration in many earlier perspectives and practices. The implications of feminism for the alternative economic strategy are one case in point. Furthermore, the Left must evolve political styles and forms appropriate to the world it is striving to create, ie, participative, egalitarian between the sexes, and multi-racial.

What is clear is that the successful implementation of the politics of *British Road to Socialism* would strengthen and reinforce all those anxious to shed narrow sectarian approaches. A clear assertion of the hegemony of the broad Left over the fundamentalist Left is crucial if left wing politics is to reach into the heart of the labour movement; approach new social movements in a spirit of dialogue; and engage with the millions of working people for whom politics is a low priority. Far from being 'right wing' or 'reformist' it is the strategy and style of the CP and broader Left which offers a road out from Toryism; an avoidance of centrist 'new realism', and an exit from sterile leftist rhetoric. The next three or four years will show whether the Left will take it. □

<sup>4</sup> Guest speech at 38th Congress CPGB.

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THERE HAS BEEN much debate as to whether Thatcherism offers a solution to the long-term problems of British capitalism. Those problems are well-known: low productivity, declining profitability, loss of export markets and increasing import penetration. The Government's monetarist strategy has sought to squeeze out the 'lame duck' firms and target for survival those lean and competitive sunrise firms which will form the vanguard of the revival of the British economy. Figures now presented by the Treasury would suggest that the strategy is beginning to achieve a measure of success. Average productivity, we are told, is on the increase.

The problem is that this 'success' has been produced amidst widespread de-industrialisation and a massive 'shake-out' of manufacturing jobs. The process is a complex one. Job loss can be due to different kinds of production change, for example intensification of labour use, cuts in capacity or the introduction of new technology. Productivity gains in Britain, it seems, have been mostly due to shedding 'surplus' capacity and increasing labour output in the remaining plants. However, to sustain these improvements the smaller industrial base which has survived still requires higher levels of investment. Yet the Bank of England has recently calculated that once allowance is made for depreciation, net manufacturing investment has been negative in the past three years.

### The West Midlands

A key focus of the Thatcherite strategy is a fundamental restructuring of the manufacturing base of the economy. As a region with a very high dependence on manufacturing, the experience of the West Midlands provides a useful test-case of this strategy.

Once a region of relative prosperity which attracted an inflow of workers on the basis of higher than average wages, it has been hit hard and fast since the late 1970s. The unemployment rate is now among the highest in the UK and wages rates are among the lowest. One in five working people are now jobless and over half of these have been unemployed for over a year. A thousand jobs a week have gone over the last four years. In a region where the work ethic once struck a particularly responsive chord, people are now facing worklessness on a hitherto unknown scale.

However the current economic crisis in the West Midlands masks a far more fundamental problem. This is the rapid overall contraction of the industrial base. There is an extraordinary degree of

**The West Midlands was, until recession, the industrial heartland of Britain. But the current precipitous decline is as much a product of global restructuring as the recession itself.**

Andrew Nickson and Frank Gaffikin

# The Bleak Country

agreement about this between much of the labour movement and business interests in the region. A recent report by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce had this to say on the subject:

'All the evidence shows that whilst the region's problems have undoubtedly been intensified by the national and indeed the world recession. **THEY HAVE NOT BEEN CAUSED BY IT.** The fond belief expressed by some politicians and others that the West Midlands economy will revive along with the UK's national fortunes is not borne out by the facts. A significant part of the region's manufacturing capacity has been destroyed and is beyond resuscitation. Those who say otherwise are deluding themselves.'

In December 1983 the West Midlands regional CBI published findings from its survey of 70 Midlands companies which revealed an 18% drop in manufacturing output over the past three years, compared to a 12% drop nationally. Its director concluded that, 'On current trends and without government action, the UK manufacturing base will continue to contract. The West Midlands, in particular, will finish up bottom of every league of economic performance.'

In its report the CBI presents the companies as helpless victims of the world recession and bemoans the fact that the West Midlands has been disadvantaged by successive government policies which have denied it regional aid. In doing so, the CBI appeals for further government subsidy to the private sector while sidestepping the responsibility of its own member companies for the contraction of the industrial base of the region.

### Preponderance of transnationals

Despite the popularly-held view that the West Midlands economy is based upon thousands of independent small to medium firms, in fact manufacturing employment in the region now displays a higher than average concentration in a small number of large companies. In the late 1970s just ten companies accounted for no less than 43% of all manufacturing jobs in Birmingham,

and in Coventry ten companies accounted for 70%. In such a tightly-knit regional economy, the fortunes of a large number of small companies are closely tied to the growth strategy of a small number of large companies to which they supply components and services. Today most sectors are dominated by a handful of large companies. Consequently, detailed investigation of the corporate strategies of these major companies in the region is essential for a more precise understanding of the dynamics of the local economy.

In our recent study,<sup>3</sup> we focused attention on the activities of ten companies which have consistently figured among the largest employers in the West Midlands in recent years — BSR, Cadbury, Delta, Dunlop, GEC, GKN, Glynwed, IMI, Lucas and TI. In 1977 they employed some 135,000 workers in the region, equivalent to 27% of their combined workforce in Britain. While they are among the largest companies operating in the region, they also feature among the largest companies in Britain. Nine of them are among the top 200 UK companies, when ranked by world sales. All are household names in the West Midlands.

In recent years these 'traditional' West Midlands companies have increasingly internationalised their production through the acquisition of a growing number of overseas subsidiaries and associated companies. This process predated Thatcherism, although it was undoubtedly speeded up by the abolition of exchange controls in 1979 and the deflationary economic policies of the present government. By 1982 each company owned an average of 39 subsidiaries and associates in 17 foreign countries. At the same time as building up their overseas operations, these companies have announced massive redundancies in the West Midlands, estimated at a minimum of one-third of their combined workforce between 1977 and 1983. Consequently several of them can no longer be considered as major employers in the region.



### Global restructuring

The underlying shift in the productive base of these companies, traditionally concentrated in the West Midlands, to new production sites overseas is reflected in company financial data. Between 1978 and 1982 the combined world sales of these ten companies rose by 5.3% pa to £13,868m. The combined value of their production in Britain (including exports) however, rose by only 1.7% pa, while the value of their overseas production rose by 12.1% pa. Every single one of the ten companies showed a marked decline in the British share of world output. As a result, the share of overseas production in the combined world output of these companies jumped from 30% to 41% in just five years.

Overseas sales by these companies grew by 9.3% pa compared to a growth of only 1.4% pa for their domestic sales in Britain (excluding exports). As a result the share of overseas sales in world sales rose from 46% to 55% in only five years. This increasing share of overseas sales would not, in itself, provide cause for concern if British exports had maintained a rising or even a constant share of overseas sales. But this was not the case. On the contrary, overseas subsidiaries contributed a growing share of overseas sales to the detriment of direct exports from Britain. Over the period production from overseas subsidiaries rose by 12.1% pa while British exports rose by only 3.1% pa. This evidence contradicts the claim by the West Midlands regional CBI that overseas expansion by West Midlands companies has had a beneficial effect on British exports. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that overseas expansion is in direct conflict with the growth in exports of British manufactured goods, a disproportionately large share of which originates in the West Midlands.

### Shift in workforce

This underlying shift in the geographical location of production is reflected in the

changed pattern of employment. In 1978 these ten companies employed a combined total of 686,694 workers throughout the world, of whom 75% were employed in Britain. By 1982 the global workforce had fallen by 23% to 530,275. This fall was accounted for, exclusively, by cutbacks in Britain, where the total workforce fell by 31% to 353,508 in 1982 — a loss of 160,000 jobs in just five years. Meanwhile the overseas workforce of these companies rose by 2% to 176,767 in spite of the world recession. As a result of these changes, the British share of the global workforce of these companies fell to 67% by 1982.

There is much evidence from opinion polls that the general public has attributed the rise in unemployment in Britain to the inevitable consequences of a world recession. However, in the case of the West Midlands this view clearly ignores the extent to which a deep-rooted global reallocation of production activities by these ten companies is having a devastating knock-on effect on the local economy. This process has been facilitated by, but is distinct from, the current recession.

### Investment in the Third World

The US and Britain, followed by West Germany and Japan, are the countries whose TNCs own the largest stocks of direct overseas investment. The location of this international capital flow remains heavily concentrated in the EEC and the US. However, the flow of direct overseas investment to the Third World has expanded over the last decade. This flow has been predominantly destined for ten countries — Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Malaysia, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and the Philippines.

The relocation of industry to Third World countries where cheap labour can be exploited has been facilitated by the development of new technology such as transport (containerisation, air cargo), telecommunications and information (data-processing systems). These make industrial

location, as well as the control of production, less and less dependent on geographic distance. Another factor is the development of a technology which makes it possible to decompose complex production processes into elementary units in order that unskilled workers can be easily trained to perform them. As a result of all these factors, TNCs are becoming increasingly 'footloose' — and are able to switch the location of production far more easily than hitherto.

An example of this trend from the Philippines is the Bataan Free Trade Zone (FTZ) where two of the ten companies surveyed — BSR and Dunlop — now operate. Free Trade Zones are industrial estates set aside for TNC manufacturing plants which typically assemble imported components for re-export. These zones offer the TNCs cheap non-union labour kept in check by harsh anti-strike legislation, tax holidays, lax environmental and safety controls, and unrestricted repatriation of profits.

Dunlop profit figures in recent years suggest an obvious reason for the shifting of production to such zones. In 1972 operations in Africa, Asia and Australasia accounted for 30% of its global profit. By 1982 they accounted for 95%. The attitude of Dunlop management to its workforce in the Philippines is evident from the following statement by DAA Osborne, President of International Sports, a Dunlop subsidiary which manufactures tennis balls in the Bataan FTZ:

'The thing you've got to be careful about when you talk, is saying you've come here purely to exploit the natives. Well, that isn't really true because we're only an employer among many.'<sup>4</sup>

In 1978 95% of the global workforce of BSR was located in Britain. Over the period from 1978 to 1982 the British workforce fell by 10,820, while the overseas workforce rose by 5,557. As a result, the overseas share of the global workforce rose from 5% in 1978 to 56% in 1982. Almost all of this increased overseas employment took place in South-East Asia,<sup>5</sup> where BSR

<sup>1</sup> Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry *Reversing structural decline in the West Midlands*, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Kevin Hawkins, Regional Director, WM CBI quoted in *Financial Times* 1/12/83.

<sup>3</sup> F Gaffikin and A Nickson *Jobs Crisis and the Multinationals: the case of the West Midlands* Birmingham Trade Union Group for World Development, Russell Press 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Interviewed on 'A Small World', Thames TV 17 January 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Workers at its plant in the Bataan FTZ, it should be noted, went on strike in October 1983 for union recognition and received support from workers at other factories in the Zone.

has invested heavily in the assembly of electronic equipment. In 1984 BSR moved its world headquarters from the West Midlands to Hong Kong.

#### A new local authority response

The rapid rise in unemployment has squeezed local authorities in the West Midlands between the growing demand placed on their services and the growing pressure on rates, as the industrial base contracts and central government rate support grant is cut back. In response the Labour-controlled West Midlands County Council (WMCC) has begun to intervene in the promotion of economic development. In 1981 it set up an Economic Development Committee (EDC) to 'give positive help to local people and firms'. Its work is financed from the proceeds of a 2p rate which local authorities were empowered to spend under Section 137 (1) of the 1972 Local Government Act, in the interests of the local area. The EDC has carried out a number of initiatives, such as the promotion of worker co-operatives, training programmes, community-based inner-city schemes and a welfare benefits campaign.

The key vehicle of the WMCC's economic strategy is the West Midlands Enterprise Board (WMEB), set up in 1982 to 'provide development capital for medium and large local companies with long-term prospects' which signed a planning agreement that increased their accountability to the WMEB and to their workforce. The WMEB received an initial grant of £3.5m from the WMCC through Section 137. This was committed to 12 companies with around 100 employees each in a wide range of sectors.

In 1983 local authority and other pension funds were invited to invest in the WMEB. Union representatives on boards of trustees were often swayed by the advice of stockbrokers that the social objectives of the WMEB made it too risky. This was the case even when there was a union policy to invest pension funds in British industry, or even directly in enterprise boards. Despite these difficulties the WMEB succeeded in raising £2.5m of pension fund finance, all of which came from London. The WMCC pension fund did not commit finance to the WMEB.<sup>6</sup>

#### Problems and limitations

There are a range of problems which local authorities face in undertaking such initiatives. There is the hostility of the Conservative government, which has sought to restrict local democracy. The limited funds available are out of all proportion to

the scale of the problem of unemployment. In addition the new economic development units often remain relatively small organisations within the overall city/county hall management.

In their desperation to maintain and create jobs, the pressure on Labour-controlled local authorities to adopt strategies scarcely distinguishable from those of the business community is ever-present. These strategies typically involve financial incentives and the provision of physical infrastructure in order to attract private investment. In the East Midlands, the Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire County Council's own EDC is even emphasising to potential investors that wage rates in the county are 9% below the national average!

### In 1984 BSR moved its world headquarters from the West Midlands to Hong Kong

In 1983 the WMCC submitted proposals for the creation of a Freeport at Birmingham airport. The rationale for such Freeports bears a striking similarity to that of FTZs in the Third World. Indeed the Adam Smith Institute, a right-wing think-tank referred to this connection in its own earlier submission to the Department of Trade:

'... although there are no Freeports in the United Kingdom, the development of Hong Kong under British rule has been a spectacular testament to the success of the freeport policy. Taiwan and Singapore have enjoyed similar success with Freeports, with South Korea and Malaysia numbered among those seeking to partake of the growth which the freeport concept achieved there. More recent examples from the Philippines and Sri Lanka seem set to achieve the same.'<sup>7</sup>

That element of the economic development strategy of local authorities which seeks to attract private investment by offering unconditional subsidies to capital has to be called in question in the current economic climate, compounded as it is by the underlying exodus of private capital from Britain. Such a strategy is becoming increasingly ineffective as the cost per job created by this process soars.

The time is surely ripe for a radical rethink of the traditional role of local authorities in the promotion of economic development. Serious consideration should now be given, at least at an experimental level, to the creation of new local authority-owned companies within the more dynamic industrial sectors, such as computer technology, where they have often pioneered new training initiatives.

Local authorities should also seriously consider pressing, within the context of the campaign for reform of local government finance, for the establishment of a system of unitary taxation similar to that which operates in a growing number of American states. Under this system, a local authority would be able to claim a share of the global profits of a parent company whose subsidiaries operate within its own jurisdiction. It would derive this share from a calculation of the proportion of the TNC's total business that is transacted locally.

#### Conclusion

The challenge facing a Labour-controlled local authority is how to exploit its financial leverage to maximise local job and income opportunities, while at the same time extending social accountability. This requires new ways of involving the general public in economic and social planning. The success of such an approach depends upon the capacity of the labour movement to redefine the traditional meaning of key economic concepts.

For example the central goal of Thatcherism is the achievement of a *competitive, profitable, British* industry. But what do these terms really mean? For one thing, the term *British* industry cannot be confined simply to companies producing in Britain. Similarly foreign competition can often incorporate overseas production controlled by British-based TNCs. And the logical consequence of the notion that British workers should become more *competitive* in order to 'price themselves back into jobs' is that they should be prepared to accept wages and conditions akin to those prevailing in the FTZs of the Third World. The promise that hard graft and good behaviour will improve *profitability* and thereby job security, ignores the fact that TNCs can decide to close a profitable plant if it no longer accords with the direction of their overall corporate identity. They can also keep open an unprofitable plant if only to prevent competitors from gaining any increase in market share.

Of course, there can be no total local nor even national solution to the power of transnational capital. Together with the development of a multilateral approach to planned trade amongst progressive governments in Europe and the Third World, there is an inescapable need for labour to develop its own international links. And therein lies another thorny problem. □

<sup>6</sup> R Minns 'Pension Funds: Local Council debate' *Labour Research* March 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Smith Institute *Proposal for the establishment of Freeports in the UK* 1981.

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## Jobs, Crisis and the Multinationals

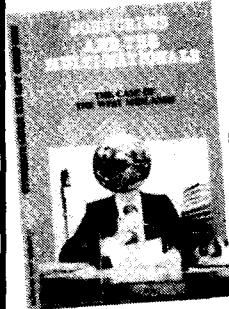
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Frank Gaffikin and Andrew Nickson

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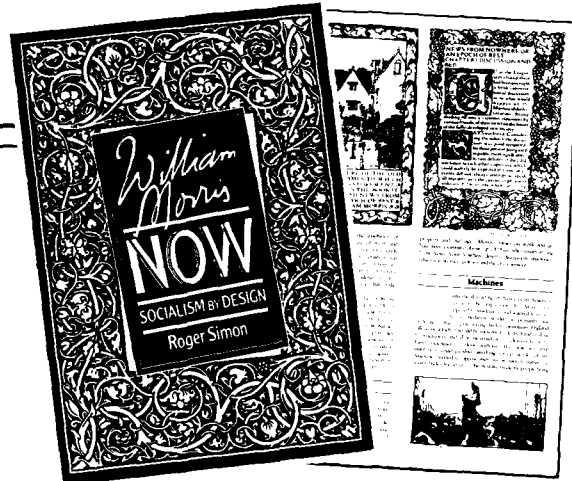


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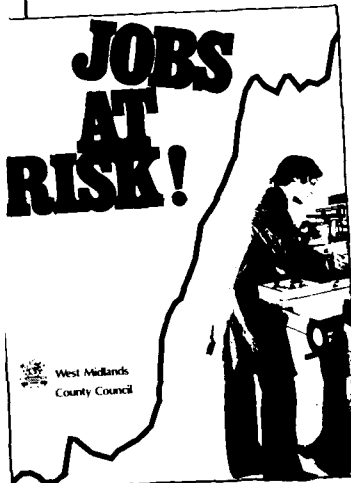
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# BARRY MANILOW — OPIUM OF THE MISSUS

Barney Hoskyns

If Barry Manilow's career is on the wane, you'd never have guessed it from last summer's grandiose Concert At Blenheim Palace, when 40,000-odd pilgrims, preponderantly female though including Culture Club's Boy George, journeyed from all corners of the country to hear the bashful 37-year-old guide them through another nostalgic round trip of 'The Old Songs'.

What does the dapper, unpretentious Mr Manilow do to bring these folks so far? What makes him different from the Neil Diamonds and Billy Joels of America's MOR Olympians? Apart from the fact that more of his tunes stick in the brain, that he can write in virtually any style, and that he is a superlative arranger (even Robert Palmer of the *New York Times* conceded that he had an 'exceptional ear for melody'), what sets him apart from the rest?

Manilow's skill is not the sole reason for the freak success he has enjoyed in the easy-listening market. His appeal to women of three generations tells us more about Western society than that people like romantic ballads. Something in his whole manner and appearance distinguishes him from the great heart-throbs, the Sinatras and Presleys: his *gentleness*. There is an unspoken, soft-focus sexuality about Manilow that seems to bring women together under one giant banner.

It's tempting to suggest that worshipping Barry is a sort of refuge for spinsters, that he's loved precisely because he is not a sex symbol. I don't buy that; it's unlikely that Manilow fans gather to discuss fantasies of undressing him, but there is no doubt that

he is discerned to be beautiful. Yet what I believe he represents is not lust but rather a transcendental, angelic maleness. As one fan puts it,

'He is every woman's sweetheart,  
Every mother's son,  
Every little girl's big brother,  
And every man's best chum.'

The way Manilow's fans talk about him argues that he is nothing less than a god, a spiritual power. Countless women claim to have overcome post-menopausal loneliness through his music. Flying to Las Vegas periodically to see Manilow perform proved cheaper for one shrewd husband than a year's tranquiliser prescriptions. And he doesn't seem to make men jealous either.

Manilow's secret is his pleasantly casual reticence. Not having been groomed as a star — his background was in jingle-writing and TV arrangement — he will only play up to his fans' adulation by way of humour, as part of the effortless control he exercises onstage (he held my attention a lot longer than David Bowie or the Rolling Stones have done at similarly sized gatherings).

If his audience is the romance-starved Mills & Boon market, he is precisely *not* the swarthy, sexually dangerous fantasy figure that tends to be the hero of those romances. If anything, he frees female

desire from the hold of that archetype, that threatening (and ultimately raping) sexuality which keeps our model of sex itself so inflexible.

As an individual man, Manilow might not be terribly sexy; as a mass icon, his gentleness — however 'plastic' it appears — makes him a god. 'When I'm listening to him', say the fans, 'I believe he's singing every word for me personally.' His sentimentality — the nostalgia of 'Memory' and the 'The Old Songs' — encourages not swooning self-pity but calm and solace. He gives loneliness a mass identity: 'you don't have to be lonely all alone.'

I find it rather moving.



## PHOTOGRAPHY'S CHANGING FACE

Allan Harkness

Over the past 10 years, capital investment has created severe extremes in photography. A nuclear arms budget has delivered space satellites capable of 24-hour global surveillance while Japanese and American high-technology based consumer industries have created a 'home and holiday' market. This leisure and recreation market ranges from Instant, Disc, 35mm Compact and 35mm SLR cameras to film and processing laboratories. It is worth over £500 million a year in Britain alone.

The 'market' has a big say in how we use cameras and photographs. There is a tendency for the camera to be depoliticised: it is used unquestioningly for celebrations, family events and annual holidays but it is rarely used at the place of work, nor is it used critically in the public and social domain. On the other side of things, with professional photographers and photographic agencies which serve the press, the market has had fairly direct control over the *context* in which photographic images have been understood. Context is the main force (some might say total) in determining the meaning of every photograph since a photograph in itself is a highly ambiguous record of appearances.

However, within and alongside the market over this last decade, there has been the shaping power on photography of Arts Council policy, the effects of the growth of cultural studies, the stranglehold of the mass media on communications, and the changing use of visual images by agitational social welfare and political groups (from Shelter to the left press) who have to compete with the saturation-level pervasiveness of profit-based advertising. To look at what has been happening recently in photography we have to take all of these forces into account, especially in any concern over socialist photographic practice.

The Arts Council has increased its financial provision for photography from £19,000 in 1973/4, £100,000 in 1976/77, to more than £250,000 this financial year. It has provided the following: aid to galleries, exhibition subsidies, awards to photographers with specific projects to complete,

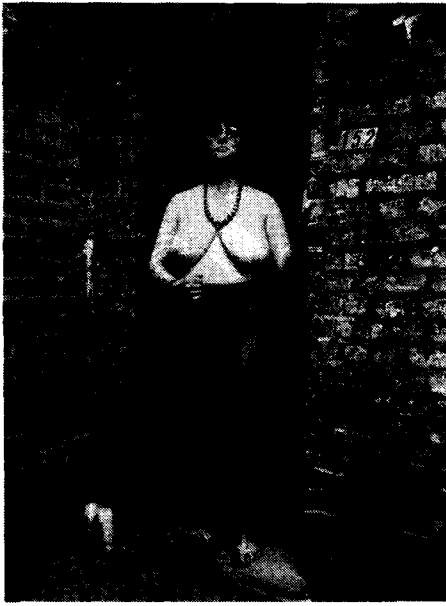
major bursaries, publications (including their own British Image series), money for fellowships and photographers-in-residence, grants to magazines and publishing companies and grants to regional and national archives. The Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils have had a lot less and lack resources as a consequence. For example, £33,500 — almost the whole annual photography budget of the SAC — was given to the Scottish Photography Group who have yet to settle in their own building. Arts Council provision sounds generous and accommodating. All the major left work in photography receives a share (with the exception of Photography Workshop, more of which later) but they have had to struggle for it and 'censor' themselves at times.

*Camera* work has been the major force in

promoting and developing a left and feminist history, theory and practice in recent photography. Its community-integrated workshops and dark rooms have a firm cooperative and educational foundation; its gallery organises and displays local, national and international work favourable to the interests of many oppressed groups, and promotes image and text material which can circulate as travelling exhibitions for schools, galleries and workplaces; its magazine has been a channel for, and provocative guide to, practising photographers, academics, community action groups, students of media studies, alternative press agencies and all others who make up its wide readership. The other leading magazines covering historical, theoretical and practical issues and themes whilst providing exposure space for contemporary photographers are the radical *Ten 8* (Regional Arts funding, Birmingham based) and the 'very respectable' *Creative Camera* which prides itself on its expensive, high-quality Duotone and 4-colour printing. *Screen* and its recently incorporated relative *Screen Education* have had important space allocated to photographic



Brassai, 'The Last Bum of the Cour des Miracles', with his cat, 1932.



## COLONIZATION

Terry Dennett/Jo Spence, from *REMODELLING HISTORY*

practice, as has *Block*, all three being key sites on the Left for the display, analysis and debate of aesthetics and politics. All of these magazines have had financial assistance from the Arts Council or one of its English Regional Associations. Exhibition sites have sprung up along with *Camerawork* (the old Half Moon Gallery), from the up-market Photographer's Gallery (£150,000 subsidy in 1982/3) to the ICA, York and Southampton galleries, Glasgow's multi-purpose Third Eye Centre, Newcastle's Side Gallery (home of Amber Film and Photography Associates) and the Victoria and Albert's new photography gallery. This last venture can be read as the official stamp on photography as 'Art'.

Indeed, the price of Arts Council funding, that relatively meagre but valuable amount of aid to develop and expand photography, has been the enclosure of photography within the bounds of 'Fine Art'. Art in the market place has been valued for the cultivation of élitist aesthetic experience so when 'Art' subsumes photography there tends to be a social and political dis-utilisation of the camera and the photography. Of late, 'Art' and photography have almost become one.

We can date the loss of the photograph's leadership in reportage or as social and historical witness to the period when the television camera came to the fore of documentary and social reportage, war reportage and, to some extent, advertising. The transition date could be as late as the

## FETISHIZATION



of socially coherent, informative and sympathetic work. The Americans Bruce Davidson, Danny Lyon and Diane Arbus, for example, were turning the tide from the continents of André Kertész, Brassai (Gyula Halász), Robert Capa, David Seymour, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Werner Bischof and many others at work in mid-century. American hegemony struck photography as it did all spheres of activity in postwar Britain. Again, in the early 70s British conceptual artists and sculptors made 'Art' photography in their treatment of art as idea, art as the making process and preservation of images, art as activity-in-duration, art as remote earth sculpture displayed as photographs, and so on. The work of Richard Long and Hamish Fulton is fairly typical of this conceptual drive. When the artist of the 70s took the camera in hand we were subjected to an eccentric expressionist photographic language. This language spoke against the older 'humanitarian' photographers and those younger ones influenced by both cultural studies and discourse theory (a theory which sees *individuality* and *identity* as areas which are fought over by the state, by institutions, and by *representation* and *misrepresentation* in culture).



Victor Burgin, from his exhibition *The Bridge*, presently touring the UK through Impressions Gallery, York

In recent practice, there are at least six important examples which have developed a specifically socialist photography. Each extends different traditions and activates different relations with class-based politics and 'Art'. They are the work of Victor Burgin (photo and text), John Berger and Jean Mohr (photo and text and photonarrative, images arranged in such a way as to tell a story), Peter Kennard and Ric Sissons (photomontage and text), Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn (photomontage and text), Nick Hedges and Jo Spence. The Workers' Photography Movement, which was very strong in the 30s, is kept alive today in the work of Photography Workshop, a group which challenges the marginalisation of photography as fine Art.

All of these share the desire to give back to the represented the power of the image. They also share a broad commitment to realism. Realism now must be defined in terms of socialist working methods, the analysis of class and sexuality, and the

photographer's level of participation in the building of the individual's social identity. Jo Spence, for example, is particularly attentive to how — at certain moments in history — dominant practices misrepresent the actual class location of women. Also, her work often tries to show the means by which it was made. Generally, all these photographers have to counter the influence of the mass media, use alternative ways of exhibiting work, develop collective methods of production, and work for campaigning groups such as health boards, CND and local councils.

Victor Burgin's work is produced out of a difficult convergence of Marxist, Freudian and feminist theory. With many of his photographs, where each image has its meaning anchored by a short text within the image, we are encouraged to question the dominant male construction of a sexually-based pleasure in looking. John Berger and Jean Mohr, writer and photographer in collaboration, are at work

on a cultural project which cuts across the class experience of the European peasantry, the exploitation of migrant workers and the function of imagination and memory. Their sequential arrangements of photo and text put montage and associative or poetic principles to good use in imagining the lived experience of those represented. Worldwide, the peasantry are a major social and political force: Berger and Mohr bring this home in unexpected ways which are not romantic or escapist. Kennard and Sissons, and Leeson and Dunn follow in the wake of John Heartfield's *AIZ* and *Picture Post* work. These photo-monteurs, as much Photography Workshop, let history govern their production. With all of these examples of photographic practice, it is heartening to think of the great range of subjects and the treatment of those subjects. If they are only preaching to the converted then there's a collective strength of imagination growing; if they are breaking new ground then it looks fertile.



## GAY SWITCHBOARD — 10 YEARS ON

Jeffrey Weeks

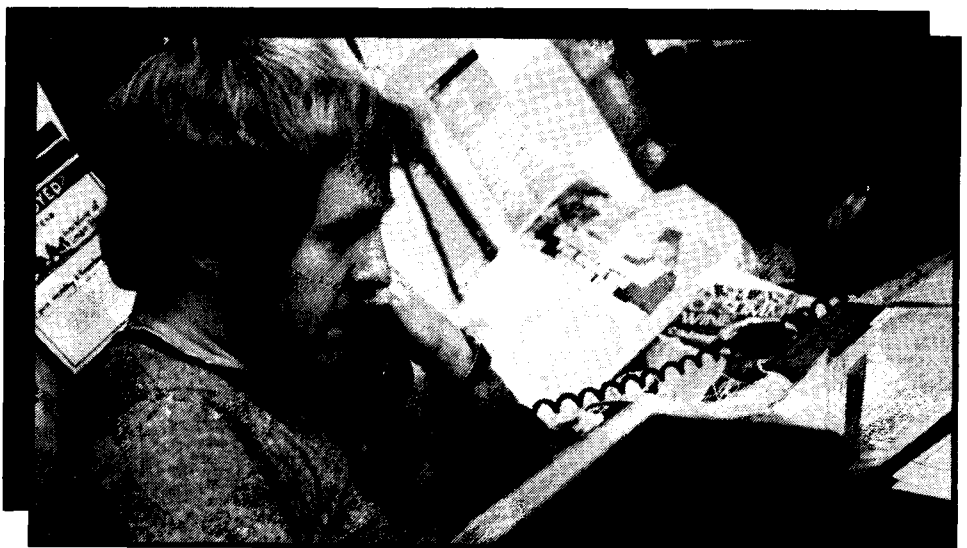
Last month one of the most enduring creations of the gay movement celebrated its 10th birthday. Largely unknown or taken for granted in the outside world, London Gay Switchboard (837 7324) has been a vital element in the building of the lesbian and gay communities. For the million and a quarter callers who have sought basic information, personal advice, legal help, employment, accommodation or medical assistance, or just wanted a chat, since March 1974 Gay Switchboard has been a friendly lifeline and, in the words of the late *Gay News* (less durable, alas, than Switchboard), 'the best thing the movement ever made'.

London Gay Switchboard is basically a telephone information, advice and referral service. Staffed entirely by volunteers, some 90 in all, it has grown from very modest beginnings, on tap for five hours a night in its first year, to become the largest gay information service in the world, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Though only about 10% of its volunteers are women, it actually has more women callers than the specialist information service, Lesbian Line (to which it refers women who prefer an all-women service).

And its fame is worldwide, with calls even from such ostensibly gay meccas as San Francisco and New York. Today it receives on its four jammed lines as many calls a month as it did in the whole of its first year, and the increase shows no signs of easing off. Even on Christmas Day last year, when all personal differences are supposed to be assuaged by a mellow familialism, there were nearly 300 calls. The demand for Gay Switchboard's ser-

vices seems to be limited only by the ability of an overstretched group of volunteers and overworked phone-lines to respond.

Its success is an impressive testimony to the effectiveness of self-activity — not the chilly and individualistic 'pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps' self-help of Thatcherism — but the collective endeavour that has been central to the emergence of the new social movements of the past 15 years. London Gay Switchboard was one of



# Channel Five

the many small collectives that emerged in the early 1970s, spun from the initial dynamic of the new gay movement. Some of these groupings were explicitly political; others were functional or entertainment oriented; yet others took up the unglamorous but essential task of counselling or befriending. Switchboard was one of a number of help lines that developed in the early 1970s (FRIEND, Icebreakers, Lesbian Line and a variety of services outside London) in response to the obvious isolation, misery and oppression, or just plain ignorance about what actually existed, that huge numbers of homosexual people still experienced, despite the glittering euphoria produced by the breakthrough of a mass gay movement. Their founding principle was the validity of homosexuality, their organising belief that it was the task of gay people themselves to respond to the needs of other gay people. Today, as throughout its decade of activity, London Gay Switchboard is not in any sense a party political or politically aligned grouping but it embodies the crucial characteristics of the radical sexual politics of the 1970s, in its affirmation of homosexuality as a sexual preference and choice, and in its implicit opposition to moral as well as political authoritarianism.

One of the favoured targets of the New Right and New Puritanism in the United States has been the new social and political prominence of the 'gay minority'. As the religious Right unfurls its flag behind family and 'traditional morality', the claim to legitimacy of once silent sexual subjects appears as a portent of social and moral disintegration. In Britain the rise of the New Right has depended much less on sexual conservatism, and the moral authoritarianism of the Right has shared an uneasy bed with economic individualism. There has been no direct or concerted

attack on the gains of the last 10 years, while the modern Conservative Party, defender of family and home, even tolerates a gay group within its ranks, trading on its name. But there *has* been a closing of space, a narrowing of the opportunities for growth and experimentation that marked the early 1970s, and a nibbling at the edges of an openly homosexual life.

The result is a paradox. On the one hand, the lesbian and gay communities are increasingly constituting themselves as a new social presence, establishing themselves as a new sexual minority, which can be politically wooed and won, or ignored and lost. As John D'Emilio recently put it (in *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*), the group life of male homosexuals and lesbians has come to encompass not only erotic interaction but also political, religious and cultural activity. As a result, homosexuality and lesbianism have become less sexual categories and more the core of 'human identities' — and political constituencies. On the other hand, the closing of space marked by the swing to the right has meant a new pressure on sensitive aspects of the gay community. There is a widespread feeling that police harassment like anti-gay violence has increased over the past few years, while the rise of unemployment and the strain on the social services has inevitably had its disruptive impact on gay people. Far from being a 'privileged minority' (as the American new Right like to present the situation), gays are likely to suffer disproportionately from a crisis in housing; mass unemployment makes it more difficult to be openly gay at work; while financial stress inevitably limits mobility and increases isolation. The proliferation of new commercial subcultures of bars and discos might offer unprecedented new possibilities for pleasure, but probably only a minority of

lesbians and gay men can expect easy access to them.

A community service like Gay Switchboard is a sensitive barometer of these changes. Only about a quarter of its callers ask for entertainment information pure and simple. The rest of the calls are concerned with a miscellany of issues. The biggest increase in calls in recent years have been those dealing with employment, accommodation and medical problems. The latter has seen the biggest leap of all, up 60% in 1983, fed by the moral panic around sexually transmitted diseases (the so-called 'revenge of the swinging sixties') and the fear evoked by the appearance in Britain of AIDS. The AIDS scare in particular has cast unprecedented light on the continued marginalisation of the homosexual experience. Much of the media coverage has encouraged the idea that AIDS is a divine punishment for sexual experimentation (the 'gay plague'), while its mysterious aetiology and devastating impact has had a fearful effect on many gay men, especially those still uncertain of themselves and their identity. In such circumstances contact with a group like Switchboard can be crucial: it can offer calm information, a necessary referral to specialist help or a self-help group, and above all supporting encouragement. At a time when the casual nexus is being officially elevated into a godhead, virtues of solidarity and human warmth have much to recommend them.

Over the years the gay community has supported Gay Switchboard with funds raised through appeals, benefits and donations (though recently the GLC has given some financial help, for instance for its accommodation service). But Switchboard itself has more than repaid the generosity. A product of the youthful gay movement it has contributed immeasurably to the building of a mature gay community.

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## MUSICALS NOW

Stephanie McKnight

Publicity for the Andrew Lloyd Webber/Trevor Nunn musical *Starlight Express*, which opens in London at the end of March, describes it as a 'new multi-media musical entertainment'. What are the conventions of musicals and how will this one deal with them?

It is possible to reckon on the presence of certain characteristic features of the musical — and some innovations. All the characters in *Starlight Express* are trains. Like other popular art forms one of the bases of the musical's appeal is a direct engagement with its audience about why they should bother to see it. The musical doesn't really exist until it has an audience and a performance. The ideal audience experience seems to be that combination of the tried, tested, familiar (and much loved) with the daring, different, 'never been done before'.

Apart from the absolute givens of music, song and dance, the most obvious mark of the musical is its discontinuity, the way in which it breaks from one mode into another; from dialogue into song, or song to dance, or dance into the resumption of dramatic action. Each of these modes has its own rules and capacities which reinforce the fact of the interruption. On the technical side — say, lighting or sound — important adjustments are required. These breaks are not obscured from the audience. Since the early twentieth century and Jerome Kern's *Showboat*, there have been attempts to make the action slide casually into song, and that approach has subsequently tended to be used as a measure of *value* for musicals; but discontinuity has never really been a disadvantage.

The fact that consistency is irrelevant highlights an interesting set of effects or

connections, from the impossibility of any potential the musical has for offering itself as naturalistic to the way in which it focuses attention on what actually *is* happening — the compression and intensification within the song, dance etc, provided by the knowledge that it will end before too long. The problem with continuity and coherence is that you have to be in on it from the start to get the most out of it. That isn't true of the musical where breaks allow you to get your breath back, but which consequently is devoted precisely to making that impossible. That is another familiar quality of the musical — the way it grapples with the possible and the impossible, tries to reconcile the irreconcilable.

The way the musical endeavours to render you unwilling or unable to lose concentration is through its overabundance; every part of it has to be filled up and overflowing. A critic wrote of Barnum and Bailey's circus in 1881: 'The only drawback to the performance was that the spectator was compelled to receive more than his money's worth; in other words, that while his head was turned in one direction he felt he was losing something good in another'.

Traces of the same concerns powerfully affect the musical, whether in the number of elements it comprises, the kinds of performance and production it demands, the necessity for all-round brilliance, or the very explicit nature of its show-iness. The look, or good look, of a musical is crucial, and it has to be conspicuous, visible to the audience. Sets, costumes, special (magical) effects, gimmicks, exotic settings, big production numbers, live orchestras, even lavish programmes and luxurious auditoria — these are all expectations set up by the musical. The sorts of words used to describe it; 'opulence', 'extravaganza', 'dazzling', 'perilous', 'explosive', the positive boasting of production costs, all contribute to that idea of the magnificent, gorgeous, sensuous spectacle. It is called, after all, 'show business'.

The musical aims to please. All the money and effort and excellence and organisation are *for* an audience and are on show. And this audience is undifferentiated in terms of its capacities to be bowled over by what it sees; and for the price of a ticket, they all come to be part of that material

wealth; to feel, each spectator, like a king or a queen.

In a strange sense the musical is a rather democratic affair. Accessibility and involvement are essential. Plots, where they exist, are simple and easy to follow, themes are familiar and easy to understand, characters have ordinary concerns, the emotional context is sentimental, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes a celebration of the everyday. The democracy extends to the performers; talent and skill are what matter and possession of these cuts across barriers. Black performers, for example, have been able to penetrate popular musical entertainment forms more easily than most others and it is generally agreed that they are still the leaders in the creation/evolution of new dance styles. When a performance is great all the barriers come down. 'The spectacle of Jolson's vitality had the same quality as the impression I got from the New York skyline — one had forgotten that there still existed in the world a force so boundless, and exaltation so high, and that anyone could still storm Heaven with laughter and cheers'. (Al Jolson in *Sinbad*)

To speculate briefly on *Starlight Express* in this connection: a pattern of connotations is attached to the idea of characters who are trains, which are at one and the same moment both modern, democratic, common and communal means of transport, and objects of nostalgia representing a nineteenth century world which is often described as in the process of destruction. For a considerable minority the train is also a magical, fascinating, exciting thing. Andrew Lloyd Webber has already successfully presented characters as animals in the musical *Cats*. It is interesting too that some of his compositions, praised for their 'evocative melodies and fine orchestration', have moved away from a story towards an attempt to capture a mood or a theme through a series of linked songs; I would expect a development of this element in *Starlight Express*.

I'm not sure I like the shift away from people: it seems to overemphasise the fantasy and ephemerality in the way musicals are experienced. But perhaps that's appropriate for present times and only a massive displacement onto non-humans will allow the flow of magic to start.

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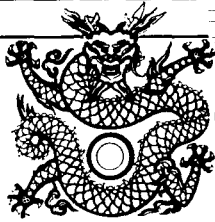
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# Channel Five

## CHINA WATCHING

April 1984 Marxism Today 41

Spotlight

Brian Hipkin

Back in late 1980, Channel 4 announced one of their first commissions, a major new documentary series on China. Four million pounds and 3½ years later came *Heart of the Dragon*. Whether the series has contributed, in contrast to much television coverage, to our ability to understand China and the Chinese, is open to question. Not that the series is limited in scope or lacking detailed background research, but dissect it and you will find 'balance' written on its heart. A balance that in part stems from the pedigree of its team of producers and directors, all of whom have had major roles in some of the most prestigious documentary programmes of the past decade — *Civilisation*, *The Long Search* and *Ascent of Man*.

Such backgrounds may not be unconnected with the fact that two major principles of programme-making have shaped the series; a sense of what makes 'good television' and a concern to distance the viewer from the material. There was no doubt that this was done in the name of integrity, but it was based on a fear that if the programmes appeared to sympathise too closely with their subject matter then the audience would distance itself by disbelief. So before it had got under way the series tripped over its own hurdle of how to portray socialism in action. The assumption that the portrayal of a socialist society requires a specifically apolitical approach was borne out by a faith in the notion of 'good television'. 'Good' meaning 'balanced' and 'balanced' meaning 'depoliticised'. This had real implications for a highly politicised society such as China. The producers solved the problem by finding a structure out of everyday life, a universal that they saw as uniting the experiences of viewers and viewed.

The results have been a series of twelve programmes that have filled our screens since February. Some of their titles give a clue to this common touch: 'Caring', 'Correcting', 'Eating' and 'Marrying'. An effect of this has been to focus the camera on that safe and well-loved concern of television documentaries — individualism. Running like a thread throughout the series has been a concern with individual freedom in China, either shocking us with its erosion or surprising us with its extent. One silent and unquestioned subject of this



series has been the use of Western concepts of freedom and behaviour, a yardstick of disapproval or pleasure. Individualism in a collectivised society? Chinese spoken with a Western accent? . . . Confusion rather than Confucius!

Not that *Heart of the Dragon* was not good, indeed excellent television. The series had over 200 hours of film and thousands of rare archive stills at its disposal. It had a group of talented people working on it every day for over three years. What we have been viewing has been new and frequently stunningly portrayed, but the script we have been hearing from the 'travelogue' voice of Anthony Quayle has been the tired old tones of the Western China-watcher. In the opening programme 'Remembering', we were given the impression not only that communism was a passing phase in China but that it had been an unmitigated disaster. Sitting at home watching what ought to be television's

definitive account of the Chinese, one has no reason to doubt the evidence one hears.

The assumption of doubting the evidence of one's eyes often led the directors (who all wrote their own scripts) to aid disbelief about what is happening in China. In the opening shot of the programme on 'Correcting', Anthony Quayle tells us that the stark walls of the interview room of the Chinese police station have 'witnessed events too horrible to mention' — an attempt to voice on screen a possible viewer prejudice, so all at once pure conjecture becomes a prejudice confirmed, an established fact.

Never again will any television team have so much time or money at their disposal to film in China, never again will there be the opportunities that *The Heart of the Dragon* missed. It has the strengths and the flaws of its genre — visually brilliant but lacking the analysis required by its subject matter. Treating the political apolitically, viewing the collective individually and framing the strange with the familiar; these are the stock in trade of 'good television documentaries'. Working day in day out for almost four years, the circular limitations of 'good television' became unspoken assumptions, an invisible framework for the production team of *The Heart of the Dragon*.

With this criteria for self-censorship and 'balance' reinforced every day when the finished product is fed to us the viewers, do we know any different? Well yes, if one remembers the television adaptation of David Hare's play *Fanshen*. In it everyday life was again the central framework — *Fanshen* was an account of what happened in 1949 to the peasants of a small Chinese village who, realising the power that had been thrust into their hands by the revolution, set about redeeming injustices against their former landlord. No notions of 'balance' here, no silent framework of individualism, yet it was 'good television'. It worked because it was what *The Heart of the Dragon* was not — committed. It was a commitment to a political analysis of China, not to a political position on China. *The Heart of the Dragon* has provided television's China-watcher with the latter by avoiding the former. Once again, unfortunately, television gives us a vacuous political position rather than a reasoned political analysis.





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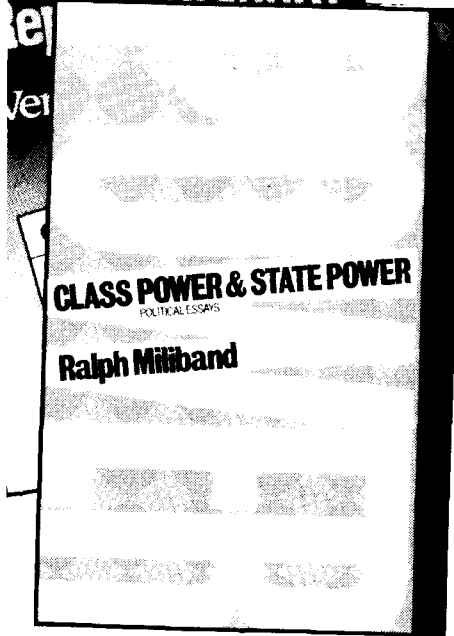
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What is  
proportional  
representation?

# REVIEWS

April 1984 Marxism Today 43



## CLASS POWER AND STATE POWER Ralph Miliband

Verso/NLB £18.50 hbk £5.95 pbk  
ISBN 0 86091 073 3 hbk 0 86091 773 8 pbk

This is a collection of some of Miliband's best essays spread over nearly 20 years. It covers a wide range, from the renowned exchange with Poulantzas on the nature of the capitalist state, to an assessment of Allende's Chile, to a critique of what has emerged as the orthodoxy on Labour's 1983 defeat. The volume follows closely on the heels of Miliband's *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (itself a re-working of his influential *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969)), and so seems to complement those more sustained works.

However, compilations of this kind are seldom satisfactory. True, in this case there is an overall theme and three thematic subsections to give it shape (though the last section on Britain is, absurdly, 30 pages long — as against 150 for the other two). Even so, there are changes of tone and gear across several distinct topics and 300 pages, and this makes the book feel long and somewhat uneven. General themes always seem to promise more than scattered reviews and occasional talks can deliver when assembled in one place.

Miliband's main concern over the years has been the connection between class structure and the state in capitalist society. Poulantzas, in the heyday of structuralist Marxism, accused him of 'empiricism' (lack of proper theory), because Miliband tried to show the personal and class ties between individuals within the separate branches of the Establishment. At the

time, Poulantzas seemed to many to have a point: shouldn't Marxists be more concerned with a scientific theory of objective political structures than with identifying those persons who happened to occupy them? Miliband's responses, and his valid criticisms of 'structuralist abstractionism' are reprinted here. Re-reading them today, his balanced emphasis on theory-plus-research appears not only to have been unfairly caricatured then, but stands as a manifestly correct Marxist method.

Miliband's standpoint on class and the state has always seemed correspondingly reasonable. He has sought to avoid reducing institutions and political regimes to their class basis alone; yet has insisted that state elites do in the end serve to uphold the capitalist system. He pointed out (in 1965) that Marx himself knew how the state could become independent of the contending class forces (as in 'Bonapartism'), though Miliband allows that this has been a 'secondary' view in Marx in the Marxist tradition, the primary one being that the state is a instrument wielded by the ruling class against both the interest of labour and popular democratic agitation.

To use a favourite Milibandish expression, the state apparatuses are not *simply* vehicles for capitalist interests, but that doesn't mean that they are not *also* that. State power, Miliband says, is definitely *not* the same thing as the power of a specific class, but against 'ex-' and 'neo-Marxists' he wants to insist that the state does not have interests separate from class-based social forces.

As a general perspective, this version of the 'relative autonomy of the state' view is persuasive. However, whilst remaining at that level, there must be a suspicion that Marxists want it both ways. Miliband in particular is prone to this charge. He has usually operated with rather imprecise definitions of both class and state (dominant class, ruling class, power elite, Establishment, political system and so on). This looseness is not a problem — in fact it is a virtue — from the point of view of the 'secondary' Marxist position I mentioned. But Miliband is also capable of some strikingly 'functionalist' formulations to the effect that whatever they might say, the gamut of ruling class fractions and state offices have as their general purpose the preservation of capitalist relations. There is some discrepancy between these two sides of the 'relative autonomy' position.

In one essay in this book, Miliband puts forward the idea that the relationship

between class and state is one of 'partnership'. As such, it can be harmonious or tense, and indeed can be said to characterise socialist regimes as well as capitalist ones. This suggestive notion needs to be given a substantive rather than just a theoretical treatment. The trouble with Miliband's last book, I thought, was that it hovered between another recapitulation of general and sometimes discrepant statements, and a detailed analysis of the British political formation. In that sense it was a missed opportunity, and this book is no substitute really.

Politically, Miliband's long-standing independent Marxist socialism is well illustrated here. Again, his typical strengths are evident, whether in his sympathetic but severely critical analysis of pre-coup Chile, or in his (surely correct) observation that the British Labour Party has never been socialist, or even held the pragmatic allegiance of the working class as a whole. His conclusion from the latter point is that the seriousness of the current working class 'desertion' from Labour has been, Hobsbawm-wise, exaggerated, and that the historic task of building a genuinely educative and independent socialist party in this country remains the only key to a distant future.

Miliband's middle way between what he terms revolutionary 'catastrophism' and reformist 'constitutionalism' is thus a principled one, and worthy of respect. There are many 'non-aligned' socialists who share his concerns, and it is certainly wrong to think that all active and realistic socialists have to be in the Party (whichever Party that may be thought to be). Nevertheless, the logic of Miliband's stance runs the risk of being either too utopian or too pessimistic to offer much scope for effective interventions in current British political conditions. Similarly, whilst his independent Marxism is helpfully sensitive to the dangers of both ultra-leftism *and* reformism, he also seems to be caught uncertainly between the two. Perhaps a more productive approach is to question the moralism inherent in that increasingly abstract polarisation, rather than to continue to seek out an ideal — perhaps illusory — compromise. Ralph Miliband would possibly not disagree with that sentiment, but it is not clear to me that his considerable contribution to left thinking amounts to a theoretical or political position which is convincing enough in its own right to point the way forward.

Gregor McLennan

**WHAT IS PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION****Vernon Bogdanor**Martin Robertson, £3.95 pbk  
ISBN 0 85520 7418

Proportional representation is a basic democratic demand in British society today. Opinion polls show four to one people in favour of it. Electoral reform organisations and a number of political parties, including Liberals, SDP and Communists are for PR. (The Labour and Conservative parties oppose it.)

Vernon Bogdanor has written a lucid analysis of the defects of the present voting system, and the advantages of PR. But at the end of the day he tries to equate it with a non-class view of Britain. 'Those who support PR must also take a particular view about British society. They must assume it is so fundamentally united that the basis for agreement between different parties is actually present.'

Why? Proportional representation is merely a voting method that ensures that representation in Parliament is equivalent to the votes cast for various parties by the electorate. It will not eliminate the deep class conflicts in Britain any more than it has in other capitalist countries. The Tories will continue to pose solutions to the crisis that are in the interests of big business. The working class will continue to defend itself against these attacks and to put forward its own solution to the crisis.

One can understand Tory opposition to PR; it is at one with their attacks on trade union rights, their proposals to restrict and in some cases to abolish local councils, their proposed increase in police power. All are anti-democratic and against longstanding British traditions. But the struggle for democracy on all fronts is crucial for the renewal of left forces following their heavy

defeats in the general election. The working class, and the allies it can win, need to defend existing democratic rights, but we also need to go beyond these, to extend the frontiers, to enable people to have ever more control over their own lives.

Parliament began as a thoroughly undemocratic institution. Working class and democratic struggle over two centuries brought about many changes — adult suffrage, secret ballots, votes at eighteen, etc. Further steps are needed if parliament is to be transformed into a body truly representative of the will of the people. PR would ensure at least that the wishes of the people expressed by their votes would be reflected in the composition of the parliament elected.

Bogdanor is right when he says that 'it is to take an over-simplified view of politics to imagine political alternatives can be confined to two ideologies — free-market liberalism and socialism'. Modern capitalist society is exceedingly complex. The composition of the working class itself has undergone great changes. There are different middle strata. There are interests of gender and race as well as class. Parliament must mirror these complexities, must become one of the fields of struggle for a broad democratic alliance of the working class and a wide variety of social movements and forces. To do that proportional representation is essential.

As Bogdanor points out, the present electoral system means that a party with a minority of votes can win a majority of seats. Minority parties are discriminated against unless their support is highly concentrated. The voting system forms and maintains a two-party system.

Bogdanor also describes in detail the German system, where electors have two votes, one for a constituency MP, the other for a party list. Half the seats in the

Bundestag are filled by constituency MP directly elected, as in Britain. The other half are allocated to parties so that representation is in the same proportion as the overall vote, providing that the party receives over 5%. In my view this place too much power with the party machines.

The single transferrable vote is the system most widely canvassed in Britain and Bogdanor uses Ireland as the source for examples of it in practice. It requires multi-member constituencies, returning say, 5 MPs. The elector has one vote, and he or she numbers the ballots in order of preference for candidates. If a candidate receives more first preference votes than are needed to win the seat, the surplus votes for that candidate are transferred to their second preferences. Or if a ballot paper's first preference has the lowest vote, that candidate is eliminated, but the vote is transferred to second and subsequent preferences.

This is a simple system for the voter. It means that the vote always counts, as far as preferences are made. It gives the elector an opportunity to express preferences for different candidates in the same party and this has the by-product that it strengthens the relationship between the MP and the constituency — almost every member of the Dail in Ireland is a longstanding resident of his or her constituency. All the evidence is that representation of women and of ethnic minorities is greatly improved under this system.

In the preface Bogdanor says: 'Although the book reaches certain conclusions, I shall not be too disappointed if readers emerge with a different verdict. The book's purpose is to clarify.' It certainly does that in describing the different systems, and in putting the case for PR. As such it is a good read, and also a useful reference source.

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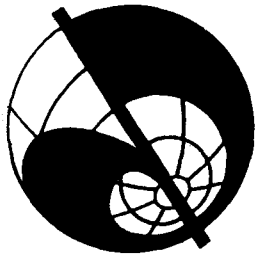
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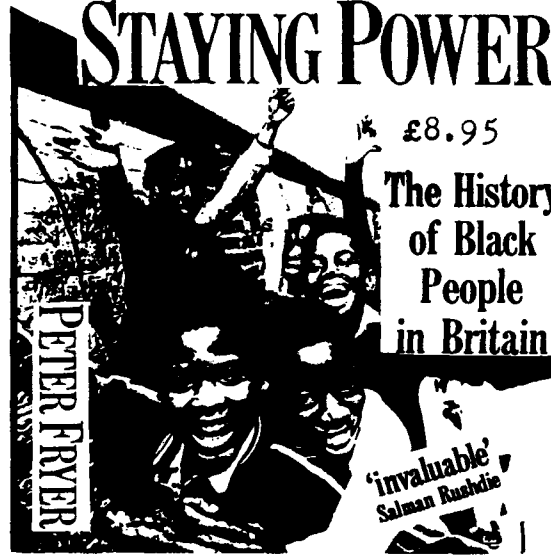
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# THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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women give  
their own  
reasons for joining.



**VERONICA RALPH (Bristol)**

Unemployed; communist  
candidate in local elections

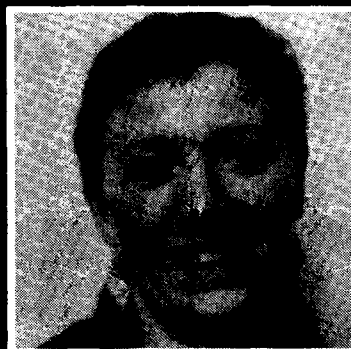
*I joined the CP because I wanted to change it. There are not enough women in it and I felt it was about time we took over.*



**KATE SULLIVAN (London)**

Single parent; works in the CP's press & publicity department

*The CP's programme, the British Road to Socialism, recognises that feminist ideas are central if we want to transform peoples' lives. We still have to win this understanding among some comrades who regard feminism as a peripheral issue. But which other party even has it on the agenda? For socialist feminists the CP really is the only choice — warts and all.*



**JANIE GLEN (Hull)**

Trade Union activist and member of the party's Executive Committee

*I come from a communist family, so I joined the Young Communist League when I was 15 and the party when I was 19, although I didn't stay long in either. Both experiences taught me to think of politics as boring and intimidating. I came back to politics through the women's liberation movement. Feminism changed me, and although you ain't seen nothing yet, it's changing the CP. That's the reason why I'm here, to stay this time.*



**BEA CAMPBELL (London)**

Author and journalist

*I joined 20 years ago to become part of the world and to change the world. Then I became a feminist too, and realised the CP wasn't going to change itself — it's all about contradictions, as the man said. Like love, contradictions and change are the essence of existence.*



**CATHERINE FERGUSON (Notts.)**

Retired; chair of her local federation of OAP's

*I come from a family of miners. I joined the CP at a rally during the war. I've had enough of wars: I lost two of my brothers in the first and my son was taken prisoner in the second. The capitalist system taught me all I ever want to know about poverty during the Depression, and I've been fighting it ever since.*

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# Letters

## CONTEMPLATIVE AFTERNOONS

I was incensed to read Ron Collins' letter on fishing in *Marxism Today* (March issue). He defends his sport on the ground of its 'impeccable working class credentials'. Surely this is no case for practising wanton cruelty on a national scale. If it were, then surely we could make a similar case for bullfighting — a most gruesome ritual which is kept going largely through the patronage of large numbers of British tourists of 'impeccable working class credentials'. Perhaps the practice of bear-baiting could once have been justified on the same grounds? I think not.

Mr Collins wonders if it is 'too much to hope that the Broad Left will speak with a united voice and defend the contemplative afternoons of so many working people'. Well, the answer is yes, the Broad Left will speak with a united voice, and if you would care to read what Marx had to say about *unnecessary* cruelty to animals, you will see that they will one day speak to defend the contemplative afternoons of *all* living creatures, and for them to live their lives in peace along with the rest of mankind.

Paul Watts, Bootle

## CND AND THE WORKING CLASS

According to Richard Jewison (March M1) CND demonstrations and meetings are largely middle class.

In my CND group, the most active members include workers in the post office, British Telecom, health service, local government and railways — hardly middle class by any definition. My limited experience of CND at regional and national level leads me to believe that this is not untypical.

Richard Jewison seems to have fallen into the trap of thinking that because the *organised trade union movement* is not active enough in support of CND and its aims, that means that individual members of trade unions are not playing a part in the movement. The problem is to knock down the wall that exists in the minds of many between their work as trade unionists and as peace activists.

Only when these rank and file trade unionists start to campaign for their unions to come in decisively behind the aims and activities of CND at both national and local level, will we move beyond the passing of resolutions at trade union

conferences (valuable as this is it is only part of what is needed), and bring the full force of the organised working class movement into action against Cruise and Trident missiles and for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Margaret Woddis, London

## TRADE UNIONS AND YTS

Dan Finn's article about the YTS ('Britain's Misspent Youth', *Marxism Today*, February 1984) should be a spur to us in the trade union movement to consider how the scheme can be used to our best advantage. There can be no doubt that the general trade union response to the YTS has either been docile acceptance or outright rejection. An alternative approach needs consideration. It is all very well to talk of the TUC policy to negotiate improvements, to recruit trainees and to monitor the impact, but this fails to recognise a new opportunity that has opened up to the labour movement. This is the direct access to hundreds of thousands of young people when we can put across our ideas and listen to theirs.

It is stated in the article that the YOP (and I expect the same for the YTS) found many of its placements in small, low-paying, non-unionised workplaces — the very areas in which we find it difficult to have influence. With official TUC involvement with the MSC we can and must demand an input in the off the job training courses — and not just during the induction courses. This is a challenge to the trade unions, and for all the excuses we hear it is one we must accept and therefore develop the skills to make ourselves understood by these young men and women.

In the past few months I have spoken in my capacity as an official of the shop workers' trade union to a few hundred young people on the scheme, and I have found that they had a very clear understanding that the YTS is a very second-rate alternative to a job. Indeed the more the MSC gild their lily the clearer the young people see that Thatcher's promises sent to them via the Commission are bankrupt — experience is a good teacher.

In urging the participation of trade unionist in the YTS I am not dismissing the dangers which exist, particularly its use to depress wage rates. The YTS is an active policy to reduce wage rates. Considering it along with the Young Workers Scheme, which subsidises low-paying employers, and Thatcher's

plan to take young people out of the scope of the Wages Councils it may become another means toward the pauperisation of the working class. It is our job to stop this but at the same time to use the advantages which exist.

B. Rowlands, Ely

## QUESTION MARKS

'Labour: Rump or Rebirth?' (*Marxism Today*, March issue) attracts question marks in the margin as did 'Labour's Lost Millions'. The biggest appears next to that part where Eric Hobsbawm tells of a golden age, the first half of this century, 'when we could rely on a growing number of workers accepting the equation: class = support of the workers' party = for socialism'. But today, he continues, 'we can't rely on the automatic growth of class consciousness with these implications'. Could anyone ever do so?

Electoral support for the Labour Party in the period does not support the concept. Using the equation as a guide, the fall in the Labour's vote by 2 million in 1931 is inexplicable. The slight recovery of 1935, deep in the heart of the depression when class consciousness should presumably have heightened and brought the implications into full operation, poses another difficulty — why wasn't it better?

There never is automaticity. It always takes hard work to free workers' minds of ruling class ideas. It helps when those aiming to do so work correctly. The overall question asked by so many after the first article — has Hobsbawm charted the proper course for modern circumstances? — remains unanswered.

Peter Pink, Uxbridge

## NOTE

Over 600 people attended the *Marxism Today*/Labour Coordinating Committee debate on 'Labour's Lost Millions' at Friends House, London on 7 February. Eric Hobsbawm, Robin Cook, Harriet Harman and Beatrix Campbell introduced the meeting with their contributions, and this was followed by a discussion. The audience was predominantly young, including many Labour Party constituency activists and Communist Party members.

We welcome your letters for the May issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday 6 April.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Gerard O'Neill** is the information officer of the Family Policy Studies Centre.

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**Chris Mowles** is a researcher and writer on the Middle East, currently working for the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding.

**Beatrix Campbell** is the author of *Wigan Pier Revisited* and a member of the Communist Party.

**Jon Bloomfield** is a member of the Communist Party's Midlands District Committee.

**Frank Gaffikin** is a researcher at the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre.

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**Jeffrey Weeks** works in the Department of Social Work Studies at Southampton University and is a writer and activist in gay politics.

**Stephanie McKnight** writes about popular culture.

**Brian Hipkin** is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at City of London Polytechnic and a consultant on *The Heart of the Dragon*.

**Gregor McLennan** is the author of *Marxism and the Methodologies of History*.

**John Peck** is the Communist Party's national election agent.

Entries for the May Update should be sent as soon as possible (latest date Friday 6 April) to Maria Loftus, *Marxism Today* 16 St John Street London EC1 or tel 01-251 4406 or 01-607 3344 (evenings).

## NEWS

**Summer Holiday School Italy** 29 Jul - 12 Aug. A holiday to provide a combination of politics and enjoyment. Discussions about politics here and in Italy plus excursions and lots of free time in the well equipped 'Istituto Studi Comunisti' in the Alban Hills (swimming pool, bar and beautiful countryside). Cost £260 all in. Organised by the CP Education Dept (01-251 4406).

**Ban on 'Lenin for Beginners'**

Once again apartheid crosses the colour bar to the mind bar! Mr Pule Monama, national organiser of the Azanian Student's Movement appears in court this month charged under the S. African Publications Act for allegedly possessing *Lenin for Beginners*. Further information and offers of help to, Gary Pulsifer The Writers and Readers Collective (01-261 0511 or 01-485 3883).

## CAMPAIGN

**East Anglian Alliance** A federation of 60 organisations campaigning for a sensible energy policy for Britain. Currently focussing on the Sizewell 'B' public inquiry, they produce a fortnightly magazine *Sizewell Reactions* and provide a regular briefing service. Donations to or details from EAA, 2 St Helens St, Ipswich (0473 214308).

## MEETINGS

**Asbestos on our doorsteps** 10 Apr. Has the case been won, buried or swept aside? One in a series of meetings on the politics of science organised by the Society for Responsibility in Science. With F Hassen, a researcher on asbestos and a speaker from UCATT. At Manchester Poly Students Union, Sidney St, Manchester 10.7.30pm.

**Why the Morning Star is indispensable** 17 Apr. (Tues) Ian McKay CP National Organiser opens a discussion on how the *Morning Star* can be a complement to a regular diet of *Marxism Today*. Organised by Stevenage branch CP at Friends Meeting House, Cuttys Lane, Stevenage Herts 8.00pm.

**Culture and the Left** 26 Apr. (Thurs). Discussion to be opened by Richard Dyer. Meeting organised by Dudley CP The Swan, Castle St, Dudley 7.30pm.

## CONFERENCES

**Conference on Socialist Housing Policy** 31 Mar. (Sat) 'The right to a home' Speakers include Chris Holmes, John Fraser, Peter Kellner and Chris Smith. Organised by Labour Housing Group, PCL New Cavendish St, W1. Information from Geoff Randall, 4 Fairly Rd, NW6.

**Conference on Chilean Women** 7 Apr. (Sat) Programme includes workshops on how women organise in Chile, Chilean women in exile and their right to return to Chile, Chilean women in cultural resistance. Creche and food provided. 10am till late South Bank Polytechnic Students Union, 17 Rotary St, London SE1. Details from Chile Solidarity Campaign, 129 Seven Sisters Rd London N7, (01-272 4298).

**A Better Future for Defence Jobs** 7-8 Apr. (Sat/Sun) A conference for trade unions working in the defence industry to examine alternative

present situation of feminism and what CP women can contribute to feminist politics. Pooled fare, accommodation and creche available. Information, bookings (must book one week in advance) and accommodation from Lynette Willoughby, 10 Quarry Mt Terrace, Leeds 6 (0532 456462).

**Race Gender and Class** 16-18 Apr. Conference to examine race, gender and class in the context of the labour process, unemployment, the State and Ideology. Papers to be presented by Tony Bunyon, Michele Barrett and others. At Brighton Poly, Falmer Site. Information from Mike Cole A Block, Brighton Poly, Falmer BN1 9PH (0273 606622).

**Communist Party Philosophy Group** 28-29 Apr. Speakers Alan Spence 'The dialectic, its Logical Structure', Tom Driver 'Marxism and Ethics', Sean Sayer 'The Actual & The Rational' and Kim James 'Marxist Theory of Perception'. Information from 01 405 9359.

**William Morris Today** 1-29 Apr. Morris's passionate belief in the need to transform not only 'art' but also the society that produces it makes him an appropriate but challenging subject for an ICA exhibition. At the Institute of Contemporary Arts, 12 Carlton Terrace, London SW1. Open 1 to 8pm, admission 50p.

**Keep the GLC Working for London** 9 Apr. Rally with Ken Livingstone and others. Organised by Westminster Save the GLC Campaign. 7.30 Porchester Hall, Porchester Rd, W2. Information from Derek Freeman (01 828 0393).

**Norwich Women's Film Weekend** 13-15 Apr. Women directors from Britain and Germany will be introducing showings of their films including Diane Kury's *At First Sight*, Sally Potter's *The Gold Diggers* and Jutta Bruckner's *Years of Hunger*. Also *Born in Flames*, films from the Australian feminist cinema and the work of women film makers from the past. Organised by Cinewomen in collaboration with Cinema City. Weekend tickets £8 (unwaged £6) Day £4 (unwaged £3). Day time creche. Details from Cinema City, St Andrews St, Norwich (0603 22047).

**Dreamtime Wake Up Black Australia** 12-18 Apr. Entertainment with Wayne Nichol, an Aboriginal, and Eric Maddad, a European Australian, in a multi-media presentation using original songs, trad and contemporary dance stories and slides. For children and adults. Admission free. Mon-Sat 11.30am and 2.30pm. Sun 2.30pm and 3.45pm. Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High St, London.

**Beyond a Joke!** 21 Apr. Racism and the Irish community, an entertainment with Christy Moore and Albert Finney. Organised by the GLC as part of their Anti-Racist Year. At the Albert Hall, London. 7.45pm. Tickets £3.50, £4.50 (bookable in advance).

**London Region CND Film Show.** 29 Apr. (Sun) 12.30pm. With Beeban Kidron, Amanda Richardson and representative from Greenham Peace Camp and the films *March to Aldermarston* (1.30pm) and *Carry Greenham Home* (2.15pm). Phoenix Cinema, East Finchley, London N2.



production, military spending and job security. Sponsored by TGWU, AUEW, TASS, ASTMS. Information pack and delegate credentials £5.00 from Andrew Hewitt, 11 Goodwin St, London N4.

**National Day School on Nicaragua** 14 Apr. (Sat) Full day event of panel discussions with leading political figures recently returned from Nicaragua, and Nicaraguan trade union leaders. Six workshops, new videos, displays, bookstall, food and drink. Evening party with band and disco. 10.30 (9.30 registration) University of London Union. Malet St. WC1.

**The Party and the Women's Movement** 14 April (Sat). A women only conference in Leeds for CP members to assess the

## EVENTS

**Our Way of Rockin'** 1 Apr-3 May. An exhibition on Rockabillys showing the relationship of style to general working class culture. An exhibition about subculture produced by the people it's about! At the Cockpit Gallery, Princeton St, London WC1 (01 405 5334).

**Camerawork Darkrooms Year Show** 1-7 Apr. Exhibition which consists of the work of 40 darkroom users during 1983 ranging from youth clubs in the East End to images of Chinese monasteries, self portraits to campaigning photographs, beginners first frames to photomontage. At Camerawork, 121 Roman Rd London E2 Tues-Fri 1-6pm Sat 12-7pm.

# It could never happen to you. Or could it?

If the Police Bill, now before parliament, becomes law, London's Metropolitan Police in common with other forces will be given extra powers.

These powers may do more to threaten the freedom of the individual, than to prevent crime.

Perhaps you think it does not affect you; that the police will only use these new powers on criminals. But, take a look at the list below. All the incidents in it could happen in certain circumstances, if the Bill becomes law.

Any one of these nasty experiences could happen to you, your family or your friends.

**\* You could be arrested, simply because a constable thinks you are committing a trivial offence like illegal parking and has 'reasonable' grounds for disbelieving your name and address.**

[Clause 22]

**\* You could be stopped and searched because a police officer thinks you might use your bunch of keys to defend yourself.**

[Clause 1]

**\* You could be frisked in the street, by force. If the police think you would not understand their reasons, they do not have to give you any.**

[Clause 2(6)]

**\* Your home could be searched for evidence, even if you have done nothing wrong.**

[Clause 8]

**\* You could be locked up for up to four days without charge and refused access to a solicitor for 36 hours.**

[Clause 52]

**\* You could be stripped and intimately searched for a weapon.**

[Clause 49-50]

The examples we have quoted above represent our interpretation of the respective clauses in the Bill currently before parliament.

All these powers would be open to abuse. It's also worth noting that the Bill confirms that complaints against the police would still be investigated by the police themselves.

**We consider that the additional powers sought in the Police Bill are unnecessary. More important, we believe they will not help the police in their vital job of fighting crime in London.** For the extra powers will almost certainly lead to increased conflict between Londoners and their police force.

The Police Bill must be opposed. It must not become law. Please, if you are concerned, write to your MP at the House of Commons, and send the coupon to us to get more information.

**OPPOSE THE  
POLICE BILL**

For the information pack on the Bill, please return the coupon or ring the GLC Campaign Hotline: 633-4400.

To: The Police Committee Support Unit Room 602,  
County Hall, London SE1 7PB.

I wish to tell friends and neighbours about what the Bill means, pack on the Police Bill.

Name

Address

Keep  
**GLC**

Working for London

For further details ring  
the Unit on 633-5944

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# THIRD WORLD BOOK REVIEW

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## WHAT IS SAID ABOUT THIRD WORLD BOOK REVIEW

■ TWBR sets out to be serious without being pedantic; wide-ranging without being morally indifferent; concerned with style as well as content.

**Ronald Segal, Publisher/Author**

■ TWBR is a publishing initiative which draws attention to the intellectual and creative output of the Third World and promotes a more informed discussion of the issues which confront developing countries and the world's response to these issues.

**Ramphal, Secretary-General,  
Commonwealth Secretariat.**

■ I believe TWBR will become necessary reading for all those concerned in the fundamental issue of north-south relations, in its political developmental and informational aspects.

**Neville Maxwell, Senior Research Officer, Oxford.**

■ TWBR is the kind of journal no serious academic, journalist, student, or anyone interested in Third World Affairs can afford to miss.

**Peter Worsley,  
Professor Emeritus, Manchester University.**

■ I find it very interesting and think it will be of considerable use to all those concerned with the problems of the Third World.

**William Clark, President IIEI**

■ We are impressed by TWBR's style and content.

**Methuer**

■ TWBR is an impressive journal.

**Penguin**

■ I think TWBR is extremely well-produced and laid-out. It contains a consistently stimulating set of high quality articles. I am sure it will be a success and will provide a much-needed forum for serious discussion of Third World issues which will nonetheless be popular enough to attract an audience well beyond the normal academic journals.

**Gavin Kitching, Development Economist**

■ The appearance of this journal, in my judgement, is an intellectual and a publishing event. The journal is very intelligent in conception, and you have managed to associate with it some of the most solid and interesting scholars of the Third World.

**Professor Yaw Twumasi, University of Michigan**

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